



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

### Usage guidelines

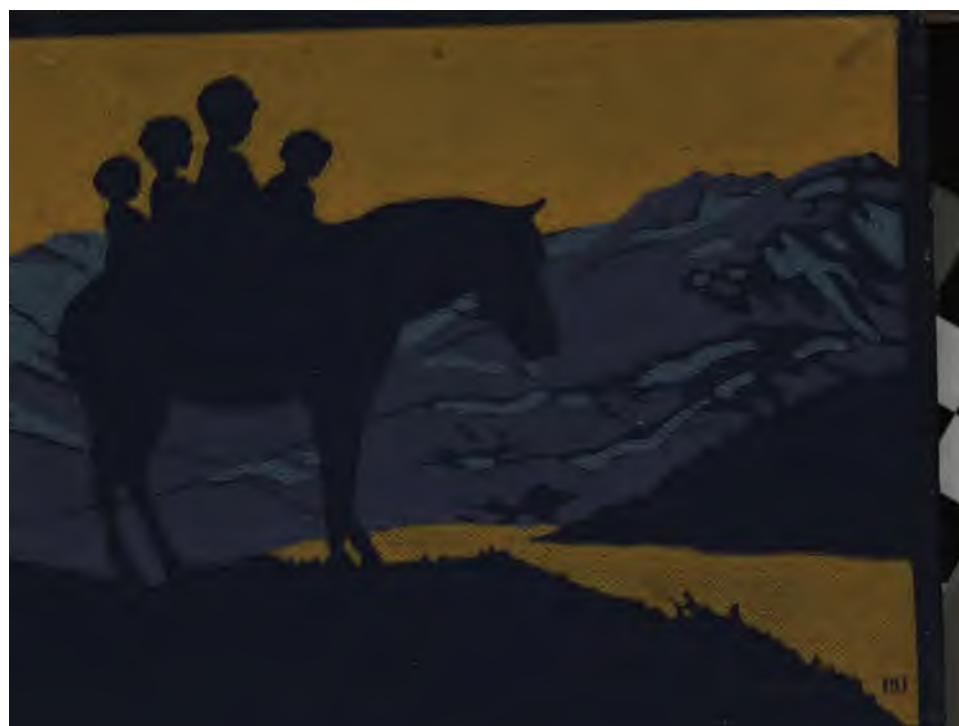
Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

### About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>



THE  
BLUE JAYS  
IN THE  
SIERRAS

HELEN  
ELLSWORTH



THIS BOOK  
BELONGS TO

Rosamond H Peirce





**THE BLUE JAYS  
IN THE SIERRAS**









THE BLUE JAYS AT HOME

# THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

BY  
HELEN ELLSWORTH

*ILLUSTRATED  
WITH PHOTOGRAPHS  
BY THE AUTHOR*



NEW YORK  
THE CENTURY CO.

1918

D35C9  
17-35

Copyright, 1918, by  
THE CENTURY CO.

---

*Published, April, 1918*

TO  
ADELE VIRGINIE



## LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
The Blue Jays at Home . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Tommy . . . . .	17
It Isn't Easy Without a Saddle . . . . .	36
Getting Ready for the Start . . . . .	45
Looking Down on Gilmore Lake from Near the Mountain Top . . . . .	56
Juliet, Jack, Jane and Jan . . . . .	73
The Baby's Morning Bath . . . . .	92
Wash Day in Camp . . . . .	109
Through Faith Valley . . . . .	115
At the Goodfellows' Cabin . . . . .	126
Highland Lake . . . . .	132
The Deer Kill . . . . .	149
A Camp Bed in the Open . . . . .	149
At Fallen Leaf . . . . .	155
Midsummer Snow . . . . .	166
The Goodfellows' Cabin . . . . .	166
A Bit of Mountain Road . . . . .	188
Dixon and a Pack Horse . . . . .	205



**THE BLUE JAYS  
IN THE SIERRAS**





# THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

## CHAPTER I

**J**ULIET was sitting on the top step of the old ranch-house in the shadow of the walnut-tree, looking out over acres and acres of green bean-fields. About a quarter of a mile away were the ranch-barns and she could see the horses, harnessed and ready, standing near the long trough, and the men gathered around the big door, waiting for the one o'clock bell to ring that would start them off to work again. The heat was rising in waves from the green fields and the air was fairly simmering.

She gave an impatient little sigh, lifted the heavy mop of hair at the back of her neck, and murmured to herself: "My, if we have

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

much more of this, it will certainly cook the beans! And then where will our autumn crop be?" Hearing her mother's step behind her, she called:

"Mama, when *are* we going to the mountains?"

Mrs. ver Planck, coming out on the wide, screened-in porch, her arms filled with an overflowing mending-basket, laughed. That question had been asked her often in the last few days since the hot wave had struck the ranch.

"Just as soon as ever we can get there, my dear," was her answer. "We ought to hear to-day from the Rangers. You know that as soon as the range is open, your father will leave with the horses."

"Then it will mean another week, anyway, before we can possibly get off," said Juliet, rather crossly. "Why can't Jane and I go with you, Mama, when you and Papa drive the stock up? Cousin Jack could go in the wagon, because he does n't know how to ride yet. Then you could come back for the little

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

boys and Aunt Jennie, just as you planned. That would be lots of fun. Could n't we?"

But "Mama" only laughed again.

"You would n't like it, little girl. It's ever so much hotter in the foot-hills than it is here, and it's riding all day long, whether you want to or not. Wait a bit. Maybe when you really know how to ride, Papa will take you." Juliet heard the creak of the wicker chair as her mother settled herself comfortably, and then came a snap and the croon of the electric fan, which shut off all further conversation in that direction.

The one o'clock bell rang, and Jane, followed by Jan and Just, and Cinders, the family fox-terrier, came running round the corner of the house. Juliet got up with a lazy stretch and from the top step looked at them reprovably.

"Gracious, you children," said she, "you must n't run like that on a hot day!" She was the eldest of the four and took her ten years seriously.

Jane looked up with a merry glance. She

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

was eight, and with her short, curly, brown hair and little blue denim knickerbockers, appeared more like a roguish boy than a little girl.

“Cut your hair off, Juliet, and you won’t be so hot,” was her retort.

Juliet’s dark, reddish brown hair was her great pride. Up to two years before her mother had insisted upon keeping it short. On her eighth birthday, when the excitement of the day was over and she thought that she had had all her presents and was ready to go to sleep, Mama came out on the sleeping-porch and whispered in her ear, “You may let your hair grow.” That had been the best present of all! Now it had reached a creditable length, quite long enough to need bows. And she had always wanted bows, just like other little girls. Both children were tall for their age, and both were dark skinned and tanned to the shade of Indians. Juliet was slender and as straight as an arrow, while Jane was strong and sturdy looking.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

It was time for the afternoon lessons, and Juliet went for her practice hour, while Jane brought her reading book and little chair, placing the latter beside her mother.

The little boys, too small yet to be bothered with lessons, went off hand in hand to the pool under the willow-tree, which a waterfall from an irrigation ditch kept always cool and fresh. Mama, from her chair on the porch, called to Jan, her little five-year-old:

"Look out for the baby, son. Don't let him get near the deep ditch."

"All right," called back Jan, "I'll be very careful, Mama."

Little Jan was a golden haired child of the north, as fair as his sisters were dark, with hair that gleamed like shining gold in the sun. It was his delight to join in all the sports of Juliet and Jane, and they always included him whenever possible, giving him a rabbit of his own to feed and look after when they took care of theirs, and taking him behind them on their horses when he

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

became tired of his own little, jiggly, slippery pony, Tommy. While they were working at their lessons with Mama, it was his duty to keep an eye on Just, the baby, a husky little two-year-old, who often led him a merry chase. They spent most of their mornings together in the garden in a huge sand-pile under a spreading palm-tree. There was a coping of cement around it wide enough to sit on comfortably, built in the shape of an octagon, which kept the sand from encroaching on the green lawn. Here, barefoot, they dug their ditches and tunnels, and on hot days were allowed to keep them running full from a nearby hydrant.

The ranch where these children lived was in the reclaimed lands of the Sacramento River Valley. Thirty years before, where the house now stood, there had been only swamp-land. Now all around was a flourishing ranch of wonderfully rich soil, where beans, asparagus, alfalfa and seed-crops—onions and carrots—were raised in huge

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

quantities. High levees on all sides kept the river-waters out, and the former were carefully watched and frequently strengthened. Not long before, when Juliet was a baby, the levee had broken and the river had swept in, carrying away houses and barns, drowning horses and cattle, and doing many thousands of dollars' worth of damage. The children loved to hear their father and mother tell of the days spent in a boat, trying to save what they could, going always armed to protect their property from the looters who came in launches through the wide gap; of the efforts to pump the district dry, with part of the big pumps which were in use during every rainy season under water and all the boilers submerged, and finally of the rebuilding of the home. The main house had been left standing, held down by the heavy brick chimneys, but it was very much the worse for wear. The ground floor rooms were half filled with mud, with here and there a gray streak—the yellowed piano-keys—and the



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

bones of animals which had come in through the broken windows in their effort to escape the water.

Jane was in the middle of a struggle with the trials of fair Elsa and Lohengrin when their father came in with the afternoon mail.

"Two letters for you, my dear," said he to Mrs. ver Planck, "and good news from Placerville. Mr. Green, Forest Supervisor, says that we may go in on the twentieth. That means we ought to leave to-morrow, as it will take at least four days to get the stock up. Now if your sister were only here to look after our household, you and I could take the horses and the cow-boy could drive the team. Then you would have a chance to choose your own camping site, and Dixon could get things in shape before the children come."

"How about the cattle?" said Mrs. ver Planck. "Won't it take longer to get them up there?"

"They don't go this year," he answered. "There are so many tourists traveling over

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

this range, visiting Mount Tallac and the little lakes nearby, who would be frightened at the sight of a range-cow in the distance, that they have barred them out. There will be just the colts and the riding stock. But see what Jennie says. One of your letters looks as if it came from her."

Mrs. ver Planck opened her mail. Then, with a happy smile, she read aloud:

"'You may expect us the fifteenth on the afternoon boat from San Francisco. Jack is crazy to reach the ranch and try his skill at riding with your little girls. We have seen enough of the San Diego Fair, lovely as it is, and I have been sorry ever since we left the East that we did not come directly to you. I hope that this extra delay will not interfere with your trip with Dirk.'"

Mrs. ver Planck broke off and rose hurriedly.

"That means they will be here this afternoon. I must go and see about their rooms. Run, Jane. Tell Juliet there will be no more school to-day, and then hurry down to

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

the barn and order the horses, for the boat has been getting in early and we must be sure and be there to meet them."

This visit of Mrs. Dumont, Mrs. ver Planck's sister and the children's much loved "Aunt Jennie," had long been looked forward to by the whole family. The bond between the two sisters was very close, though from living on opposite sides of the continent they saw little of each other. She had been with them only two years before, when little Just was born, and so knew the ranch and children well. But this time her visit had an added zest, since she was bringing with her her only son, Jack, a boy of about Juliet's age in years, but a good deal older in experience. His home was in New York City, and he had been at boarding school for the last two years.

Jane, only too glad to be released, ran off to interrupt Juliet's practice. The Czerny came to a stop with a bang, and presently two little blue figures could be seen on their way to the barn.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"There they go without hats! Will they never learn?" said Mrs. ver Planck. "You 'd better call them back, Dirk. It 's much too hot to be out that way."

"Oh, they 'll be all right," answered their father. "They don't know the difference, with their thick, curly heads. Tell them to put their hats on when they come down with their horses, before you start for the landing. What are you driving?"

"The little Arabians," said Mrs. ver Planck. "But don't worry; I 'll be very careful. I 'll walk down to the barn and start them off myself. Since your new stableman let them run away the other day, I have n't had much faith in his driving ability."

"Well, look out for them, and don't get hurt," was her husband's warning. "I 'd take you down in the car, but I must be off to Sacramento. There are some things that should be attended to if we are to leave to-morrow. Have everything ready, and we 'll pack the wagon in the morning. But

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

how about your other letter, before I go?"

"It's from your father," said Mrs. ver Planck. "He will join us on the mountain trip we were talking about the other day. He writes that he will come up in his car as far as Myer's, whenever we are ready to go, and we can meet him there."

"That's fine," said her husband. "Then he can drive the wagon. Jennie and the baby can go with him, and the rest of us can ride."

"Don't you think it will be too much for Jan on horseback?" asked Mrs. ver Planck.

"Well, we will take his pony, anyway," said his father, "and if he gets tired, he can always go in the wagon. He has been riding a good deal lately, and I have n't heard of any tumbles. We'll go slowly,—not more than twenty miles a day. That will be enough for the bareback riders."

They had come into the house while they were talking, and now separated. Mr. ver Planck hurried out to his car and was off to Sacramento City, about an hour's run away,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and his wife went into the house to give the necessary orders for the comfort of their expected guests.

Juliet and Jane, walking down to the barn together, were talking over the coming visitors.

"My, I hope he 'll like riding," said Jane. "Papa says he is to ride Merry in the mountains, but I think he 'll have to learn how before he can stick on him. He 'most lost me last week. Do you remember when he shied so badly while we were going so fast?"

"Yes; and if you are n't careful, Jolly will do the same thing," said Juliet. "Dixon says she is n't really broken yet. I wonder if it will take Jack long to learn. We 'll teach him as fast as we can."

"Let 's catch old Billy and lead him down to the landing. Then he can begin to ride right away," suggested Jane.

"Aunt Jennie won't let him," answered the more prudent Juliet. "He won't have his ranch-clothes on. You know Mama

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

won't let us ride when we are ready to go to Sacramento."

"That 's because we have skirts on," said Jane.

"When I 'm grown up," went on Juliet, "I 'm going to wear skirts always!"

"What! For riding, too?" exclaimed Jane. "Oh, I 'm not. I like these *broekjes*. You know Mama never wears skirts when she is riding, and she says she is n't even going to take any with her this year."

"Well, maybe not for riding," admitted Juliet, "but for everything else I 'll have nice, long ones, with lots of lace and frills."

"Then you can't be a Blue Jay any longer," said Jane, "and we 'll call you Miss Fluffy Ruffles."

"I 'll have them blue, and my name will begin with a J just the same," fenced Juliet. "But hurry up, Jane. Get the barley can, and I 'll bring the bridles. We 'll catch Tommy, too. Jan will want to ride with us."



TOMMY





## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

The stableman was a busy person—teams had to be hitched and unhitched, horses fed and watered, sick horses doctored, and the barn kept clean—and so the children took care of their own ponies. It was a simple matter. They were turned out in a big field nearby, where there was plenty of grass and water, and a big haystack in the corner gave them the necessary dry feed. The only difficulty came when they refused to be caught, which they did periodically. But, armed with barley, the children generally could persuade them to stand still until they had them bridled. This afternoon Tommy, Jan's little pony, was the only contrary one, and after following him around the pasture several times, they mounted their horses and drove him at a gallop into the little corral at the end of the field. Here it was an easy matter for Juliet to corner him, while Jane held the gate. He was an Iberian pony, dappled sorrel, with snow-white mane and tail, as large as a good-sized Shetland, but of more slender build. The little girls had

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

learned to ride on him, and now he had been turned over to Jan. After they had mastered him it was not a hard matter to stay on the gentler broncos, for Tommy could shy with the best of them, going straight across the road in one jump. He could go right out from under his would-be rider, his back was so slippery.

The children rode without saddles; a blanket held by a surcingle was all they were allowed to use. On the left side of the surcingle was a loop which they used for mounting when there was no fence near. Once their father had seen them using this loop as a stirrup when riding and the penalty had been no horses for a week. It never happened again. Riding in this way there was never any danger of their being dragged. Falls there had been in plenty, with tears and big, bad bumps, but so far nothing more serious.

Juliet rode an Indian pony named Gay. He lived up to his name, was always dancing with his neck arched, and was ready to be off

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

at a gallop at her slightest word. He had only one bad habit. When things did n't go just his way, and Juliet was n't watching, he would turn his head and give her a sharp, little nip on the ankle.

Jane's mare, Jolly, was larger than Gay and more of a bronco. She was still a colt, and had lately come from the hands of Dixon, the cow-boy, who had been breaking her.

"Let's get Billy, too," said Jane. "Maybe Aunt Jennie will let Jack ride, and it's easy enough to lead him home again if she does n't."

So Billy, an old, old cow-pony, was caught and bridled, and each leading an extra horse they started for the house to see if their mother was ready to join them. A distant whistle from the river made them put their horses at a gallop.

"The boat's whistled for the Grove, Mama. We'll have to hurry to beat it to our landing," said Juliet. "May we go on ahead, so as to be sure and be there?"

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Mrs. ver Planck was coming out of the house, the children's hats in her hand.

"All right," she said, "but put these on first. Next time don't forget them. If the boat lands before I get there, tell Aunt Jennie that her letter reached us only this afternoon. She will understand my being late."

Jan had joined them, and Juliet dismounted to help him on Tommy. Then the three started off, Jane a little behind to keep Billy up to the pace, and Cinders in the lead, giving vent to his delight in short, quick barks.

Mrs. ver Planck smiled at the extra horse, but did not say anything. Taking little Just by the hand, she walked quickly down to the barn where her team was waiting.

The river-landing was about four miles away, a short four miles on horseback, for the district was entirely flat. "How much it looks like Holland!" people often said, and indeed, with the deep ditches along the straight roads, the lines of poplar trees used as windbreaks, and the levees in the distance,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

it might well have been a bit of the Netherlands. It needed only the huge, wooden windmills to complete the picture. Instead, a modern, steel windmill stood out from each little group of tenants' buildings. Hills were unknown to these children until they left the ranch, and on Juliet's first trip down the river as a baby, she had exclaimed in wonder at the foothills, asking her father why these levees were so much bigger than those at home.

The boat was just pulling in when the children reached the landing. Leaping from their ponies they were in time to give their aunt and cousin a tumultuous welcome as they stepped off the gang-plank.

"Well, how are all the Blue Jays?" was Aunt Jennie's greeting. "See, I've brought you another one!"

"Sure enough," said Juliet, "'Jack' begins with a J, too. We never thought of that. You'll have to dress him like the rest of us, Aunt Jennie, and then he'll be a real one. My, but we are glad to see you; and

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Mama will be, too. She will be here in just a minute. And please, Aunt Jennie, can't Jack begin to learn to ride right away, that is, if he would like to?"—with a shy look in the latter's direction. "We brought down Billy. You remember old Billy. He can't get hurt on him, and we will go *so* slowly."

"Please, Aunt Jennie," chorused Jane and Jan. "Oh, please!"

Their aunt, carried away by their entreaties and the longing in her own boy's eyes, gave a reluctant consent.

"But remember," she cautioned, "no broken bones. I came out here to go camping in the mountains, not to stay on the ranch and nurse an invalid."

"We'll be very careful," promised the little girls. "Come along, Jack. Here comes Mama, so let's be off."

They saw their aunt into the buggy which had just come up, and helped George, the wharfinger, collect the suitcases and bags. Then Juliet led Billy up alongside the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

wharf, where it was an easy step to his back.

Jack was a well-grown boy for his age, strong and full of restless energy. The desire of his life—like so many other boys—had always been to have a horse of his own. So far he had never ridden, his summer vacations having been spent at the seashore. There he had learned to swim, and was the proud possessor of a little row-boat. When he was just a little chap his father and mother had promised him a horse “some-time.” Indeed, in a way he had earned it, for once, when he was only four years old, his father and he had been standing on the bank of a reservoir. As it was early in the spring the water was very cold and his father had said to him, more to tease him than anything else, “Jack, if you ’ll jump in, I ’ll give you a pony.” Without any hesitation the child had taken the icy plunge, and his father—it served him right, the family had said—had to follow suit to get him out again. He would have had his pony then, but they had moved unexpectedly to New York and the



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

prize had to be postponed. Now was his chance to learn to ride, and for days he had been looking forward to the moment when he should be on a horse.

He swung himself on, took the reins from Juliet, and waited while she jumped on Gay who was restlessly pawing the sand.

"You and Jan go ahead," said she to Jane. "Maybe Jack would like to walk a bit first."

"We 'll all walk," said Jane, not willing to miss any of the excitement.

So, four abreast, they started down the wide level road.

"How does it feel, Jack?" asked Jane. "All right?"

It was very far from all right, but Jack would n't have admitted it for the world. The horse seemed so much higher than he had expected; there was n't anything to hang on to, and the oiled sand looked hard and uninviting.

"Oh, fine and dandy," he answered, "but don't you ever use saddles out here?"

"Papa says he is n't going to have any of

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

his children 'pulling leather,' " said Juliet, "and when we get so that we never want to hang on to anything any more, he 'll give us saddles."

Jack wondered what "pulling leather" meant, but did n't like to ask. Jane, looking up, saw the puzzled look and exclaimed.

"That 's what they call it when cow-boys hang on in a bronco-busting show. If any one sees them, they are n't allowed to ride any more, and their staying on does n't count. You see, sometimes when we are going pretty fast and something unexpected might happen, we often hang on to the mane. We should n't, of course, but it 's all right when you 're learning. Hold on to Billy's now, and we 'll trot some. Come on, Juliet, or we 'll be late for supper."

"You say so, if you don't like it," said Juliet. "Get up there, Billy!" and she gave the old horse an encouraging slap on his back with the end of her bridle-rein.

Billy broke into a trot and Jack gave a gasp. He did n't like it a bit. It was

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

bump-bump-bump, now on one side, now on the other, but he'd have died rather than have told these girl cousins, who rode so easily, that he'd much rather walk. He glanced across at Jan who was riding beside Juliet and was relieved to see that he was hanging on to Tommy's mane with a tight hold. But then, Jan was only five.

"That's it," encouraged Juliet. "Just sit loosely; you'll soon learn. Now, we'll gallop; that's lots easier. Get up there, Billy!" and there came another slap across Billy's back, just behind Jack. Billy immediately broke into a gallop. Oh, now he never could stay on! He certainly would fall off under those other horses' feet, and for a minute Jack almost hated Juliet and Jane.

"Squeeze your knees tight!" yelled Jane. "That's the way; that's fine."

The first fear over, Jack found that it was really easier than trotting. A haze seemed to clear away from his eyes and he felt much better. But presently something inside him began to hurt and he wished more than ever

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

that those girls would stop. Juliet was watching his face—she had not forgotten her promise to her aunt—and now she called out:

“That’s enough, Jane. Slow up. We have lots of time and it’s not so late; besides, it’s hot. You remember what Papa said about bringing our horses in all sweaty. We came over pretty fast and Gay’s puffing yet.”

Walking was so much pleasanter than galloping or trotting that Jack felt almost comfortable again, and he had time to look around with interest at the ranch about which he had heard so much. They had left the levee and were going along a road with a deep, wide ditch on one side and on the other a double row of corn.

“Funny way to grow corn,” he remarked. “What’s the idea? Just looks?”

“It’s for the dust,” explained Juliet. “All that green beyond is beans. The dust from the road hurts them and the corn helps to keep it off. A watering cart would be

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

better and we 're going to have one soon."

"Beans!" exclaimed Jack; "where are the poles?"

"Oh, they 're not the pole kind," said Juliet. "They just branch out, and stacks and stacks of beans grow on them,—the Boston baked kind, you know. Why, they grow lots of different kinds here,—white, and pink, and big, brown ones."

"Is Billy going to the mountains?" asked Jack, looking down at him admiringly. His horse was of much more interest to him than farm crops. "And can I ride him there?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Jane; "Billy's much too old. You are going to ride Merry up there. I've ridden him for a whole year and he's very nice, indeed. He's dappled gray and can go as fast as Gay, but Papa thought that I'd better ride Jolly this summer, because she has such a light mouth and is n't good for a beginner. She's nice, too,"—and Jane leaned forward to pat the pony's neck,—“but she's a colt yet, and I can't al-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

ways make her do just what I want. Dixon says I ought to have spurs, but of course I can't use spurs riding bareback."

"Here comes Mama!" called Jan. "We 'd better get out of the way."

"Pull way over toward the corn, Jack, right behind Jane. That's right," said Juliet, and together they shouted and hallooed as the buggy went by, leaving a cloud of dust behind it.

"I hope I 'll have time to learn before we go. When will that be?" said Jack, as they came back on the road again.

"Mama and Papa go to-morrow, and they 'll take all our horses with them, but Billy will stay behind, and we 'll ask the foreman to let us have one other old horse so that one of us can ride with you. It will be a week, anyway, before we all go, and that will be plenty of time."

"Are we going to ride much up there?" said Jack. "My, it will be fun to camp! I never have, you know."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Oh, yes," said Juliet. "You see it's a three-mile ride from where we have to leave the automobile,—right up a steep mountain, Papa says,—and then, after we've been there a week or so, we're going to take a horseback trip right across the mountains to where we camped last year. It will take about three days to get there, and that will be lots of fun."

"Yes, and Mama says," broke in Jane, "that if we're good Indians and don't fuss about sleeping on rocks and washing dishes, we can go with them to the Yosemite next year. That's a wonderful place! So Juliet and I got some hard things,—not rocks, you know, 'cause there are n't any here, but pieces of concrete and gravel from our road,—and we've got them in our beds now. We've slept on them two nights and it's really not bad."

Jack looked at his cousin quickly to make sure she was n't trying to fool him, but her face was perfectly serious.

"Come on now," cried Jan; "let's trot

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

some more. I want to get home. Hurry up, Juliet."

"All right," said she. "Come on, Jack."

They were passing in front of a group of tenants' buildings,—several houses on one side of the road and a big barn with a corral was on the other,—when suddenly a flock of turkeys, disturbed by Cinders, came flying out from behind a heap of straw. They went across the road just in front of the horses' hoofs. Jolly and Gay side-stepped, and Billy came to a sudden stop. Not so Jack. He went right on, and landed in a little heap in front of Billy's nose.

"It's all right," he called, getting up in a hurry. "I'm not hurt a bit," but he looked down ruefully at his dusty clothes.

Juliet was off Gay in a minute. She gave her rein to Jane to hold, and came running up to help him.

"My, I'm sorry that happened," she said. "Are you sure you are n't hurt? Here, let me dust you off," and she gave Jack a few lusty whacks.



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Oh, have a heart; look out for the spot where I hit," said Jack, edging off. "I'm all right; but I'm glad mother passed before this happened, and that she did n't see it. Now how do you suppose I'll ever get on again?"

"Easy enough," said Juliet. "Give me your left foot and throw the other over. Billy will stand. Ready?" She stood braced against Bill's shoulder, her hands on her hip, ready for Jack's weight.

He was up in a minute, much more easily than he had expected, and to his surprise found that he had lost all fear of falling off again. He mentioned this to his cousins, and Juliet explained that it often worked that way.

"It's 'cause you found it did n't hurt much, after all," she said. "I've been off lots of times, and so has Jane and Jan. Now let's walk the rest of the way, and you tell us about the Fair. We went to the big fair last autumn and saw lots of interesting things. Do you remember the merry-go-





IT ISN'T EASY WITHOUT A SADDLE

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

round, Jane? And the music? What fun that was! And that great, shining tower! Jan did n't like it much, did you, Jan? He said it was just like a great big store, and he wanted to go home most of the time."

"Yes, but those boats were fun," piped Jan. "They went around in the dark and you saw pretty pictures. I liked the horse, too, that could do arithmetic better than you can, Jane."

Jack was anxious to tell them about the wonders of the Fair he had just come from, and so, chatting together, they soon reached the big ranch-barn. When they had turned their horses in the pasture, after hanging up the bridles and blankets, they felt as if they had known each other for years.

Mama and Aunt Jennie were sitting in the sand-pile, still talking as if they would never stop, when the children came walking through the gate.

"There, look at his clothes!" said Jack's mother. "I knew he'd take a tumble."

"Well, he does n't seem to have hurt him-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

self," said Mrs. ver Planck. "They all look happy. How was it?" she called. "Are you going to like riding?"

"It's lots of fun, Aunt Elizabeth," answered Jack, "and I think I almost know how. I only fell off once!"

"Good for you, Jack," answered Mrs. ver Planck; "that's the right spirit. Now run along, kiddies. Take Just with you, and get ready for supper."

## CHAPTER II

**T**HE next morning all was bustle in the ranch-house. A big, canvas-covered wagon stood outside, and Mr. and Mrs. ver Planck, with the help of the ranch foreman were busily packing it with camp supplies.

"Goodness, Elizabeth, do you think we'll ever eat all that up?" was Mrs. Dumont's comment, as she sat in the shade of the sand-pile palm, watching case after case disappear into the wagon.

"Oh, it does n't take long," answered her sister. "There'll be two men in camp this year, and the children must have plenty of the right kind of things to eat; otherwise, it won't do them much good, and they might better stay at home. You know six weeks, with no source of supply, is a long time. Of course, where we are going this year, we could get things from the hotels near Tahoe,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

but everything costs much more up there, and we are accustomed to doing it this way. Last year the nearest post-office was forty miles away."

"However do you remember everything?" asked Mrs. Dumont.

"Oh, I have lists, and every year I revise them a bit. Of course we hope there will be plenty of fish, and maybe a deer or two, with grouse when the season opens, but I've learned not to count on it. We're taking a couple of kids, so we're sure of some fresh meat, anyway."

"Where do the kids ride?" asked her sister.

"In the auto, along with the goats and the family," and she laughed at the expression on her sister's face.

"Goats?" said Mrs. Dumont. "Why goats?"

"Fresh milk for the children," answered Mrs. ver Planck. "We always take two at least. Dirk crates them in on the running-board, and on top of them go the blankets, butter, fruit, suit-cases, and all the other

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

things we can't take on this trip with the wagon. Wait until next week when he packs it; you 'll need a derrick to help you in," and Mrs. ver Planck turned back to her task of checking off the boxes and sacks. "Five sacks of flour; two sacks of sugar," she read off. "I wonder whether that will be enough. Our cow-boy is going to hate the whole-wheat flour, but he 'll have to get used to it, for I won't have the children eating that white stuff."

"Oh, you crank!" said Mrs. Dumont. "Are we to eat brown flour and natural rice all summer?"

"We are; but cheer up, there will be lots of other things."

"Who does the cooking?" asked Mrs. Dumont.

"We, Us and Co.," was the cheerful answer. "The children are the Co. No help this year. Last year I had to take one of the maids, for Just was such a baby, but it never works well. Camp life does n't appeal to them, and besides, it 's better for the



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

children to learn to depend on themselves. Camp cooking is n't hard; there is so much canned stuff, and we have the 'fireless.' I always take that when the children are along, and you 've no idea how much easier it makes things."

"Elizabeth ver Planck!" exclaimed her sister. "How are you going to get a fireless cooker up that mountain. Dirk has told me it 's a hard, steep, rocky trail and that everything will have to go on horseback."

"That 's Dirk's lookout," said the other. "He has done lots harder things than that, and he always gets there somehow. But look, Jennie! Your son is almost a rider."

They glanced out to the road and saw the little girls and Jack trotting merrily along. Jack was in the middle, bumping from side to side, but hanging on and looking as if he liked it. They walked out to the gate and the children drew up in front of them, Jack apparently as proud as a peacock.

"Don't forget to take your horses to the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

shop to have their shoes off, children," reminded their mother. "If they are to run with the colts, they might do some damage. But leave Tommy's on. He's so small that he will need his for protection against the others. Now, Jack, let's see how you can gallop. Look out for a stumble; Billy is old, you know." With a shout the three were off together down the road, Jack's heels going like mad against Billy's sides in his efforts to keep him up with the others.

The sisters turned back to the wagon in answer to a call from Mr. ver Planck for more groceries.

"I hate to leave you, Jennie, now that you have only just arrived," said Mrs. ver Planck, "but we won't be long, and I'm sure you won't have any trouble with the house or children. Call on the foreman if you want anything, and don't hesitate to ring up our doctor in case of need."

"Don't worry about me," said Mrs. Dumont. "I have ever so many letters to write

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

before I can camp with a clear conscience, and I 'll have them done before you 're home again."

That afternoon, when all was in readiness, the children and Aunt Jennie walked down to the barn to watch the start. Mrs. ver Planck, dressed in dark gray corduroys, mounted on her pretty, bay saddle-pony, Mopsa, was waiting near the big gate, while her husband, aided by several ranch-hands, was culling out a big, three-year-old from the bunch of colts racing around in the corral.

At last they had him cornered, the gate swung open, and eighty head of colts, the children's ponies, and eight or nine extra saddle-horses, all wild with excitement and ready to be off at a gallop, came pushing and crowding out.

"Block the road, children, so they can't take the wrong turn; and you take the lead, Elizabeth!" called Mr. ver Planck. "Don't hold them back much, or they will scatter among the beans."



GETTING READY FOR THE START  
*Packing in the goats*



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Down the road they went, Mopsa dancing ahead, bells ringing, dust flying, with waving handkerchiefs and shouts of good-by from the little group near the barn.

Then Dixon pulled out, his heavy load drawn by four big ranch-horses who would make easy work of the steep mountain hills, and soon a cloud of dust in the distance was all that could be seen of them.

"Well, they 're off," said Juliet. "Who knows but some day we 'll be doing that, too. Jack, would n't you come West for a ride like that? But come on, now! I guess you 've ridden enough to-day. We 'll put our old donkey in the cart and go over to the big dairy. There 's lots to see over there."

For the next week Jack had his riding lesson every morning. There was no school, as Mama was away, and it was all one glorious holiday. It was hot, but the children did n't mind that much, for in the heat of the day they played in a big room in the basement of the house, a sort of combination play-room

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and school-room which was always cool. Here they had plenty of toys and books, more than enough for a week's entertainment. Before they had realized that so much time had elapsed, Mr. and Mrs. ver Planck were home again. They came back on an evening boat, after the children were asleep, and so it was at breakfast next morning that the trip was discussed and anxious questions answered.

"Did you get there all right?" "Did you find a fine place to camp?" "How are our horses?" asked the children, faster than their mother and father could answer them.

"All of those things, and many more besides," said their mother. "We found a lovely spot up near the top of Mount Tallac, on the edge of a little lake, where Dixon is making camp. It's not as cold as Highland Lakes where we were last summer, and I think you can swim in it. There are two boats, built there by the hotel people below, and they gave us permission to use them whenever their fishing parties did n't need

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

them. Jack can teach you how to row. And to-morrow morning we 'll be off."

"Breakfast at four o'clock,—everybody," said Mr. ver Planck. "Suit-cases must be ready to-night. We've got to make an early start if we don't want to roast in the valley, because I'll have to take the top off the automobile to make room for the rest of the outfit."

"Not much use going to bed," said Jack. "Why don't we stay up?"

"You will go to bed extra early to-night," answered his mother. "You'll be tired enough by the time you get there."

"Is there plenty of snow left?" asked Juliet.

"Lots of it," said her father, "but it's melting fast. However, there is one bank not far away which they say never melts, and you can take a pack-horse and get snow there if you want to."

"Goody!" cried Jane. "Then we can take the ice-cream freezer. Did you put in plenty of lemons, Mama?"



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Dozens," said her mother, "and the freezer, too. They all went in the wagon. Now get your camp-clothes together this morning, and be sure that all the buttons are on. I want to get the bags packed early, before your father is ready for them."

The next morning, long before the sun was up, the family was ready for the start. The goats had been milked and persuaded to enter their crates, much against their will, and four horned heads stuck out from under the pile of blankets and boxes that were piled high on each side. Over the hood two saddles were strapped, with extra halters tied to them, and in the dim light the machine looked like a dreadful, many-headed dragon.

"Do you think you 'll ever make it with this awful load?" asked Aunt Jennie, as Mr. ver Planck helped her over the side.

"Of course we will," he answered. "The car will go as far as there is a road to run on. After that we 'll have to ride. I told Dixon to meet us at the beginning of the trail at

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

two o'clock this afternoon. We ought to make it easily by that time."

The lunch-box, filled with care the night before, was the only extra in the tonneau, so the children and Aunt Jennie found they had plenty of room. They settled themselves comfortably for the long ride, well wrapped in coats and blankets, for the early morning air was cold and nippy.

They sped quietly through the level valley-roads, and the sun was up and glowing when they reached the foot-hills.

"We take the Placerville road that Mark Twain made famous," said Mrs. ver Planck over her shoulder to her sister. She was sitting in front, with little Just, curled up in her lap, fast asleep. "It's a beautiful road, every bit of it, and the State keeps it in good repair. You will love it. I never appreciated it fully until I rode over it last week. One sees so much more that way."

"This suits me," said her sister. "I'm beginning to see what Dirk meant when he

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

spoke of the foot-hill heat. Take your coats off, children."

"Why, this is n't bad," said her brother-in-law. "Ride through here about twelve o'clock and see how you like it. We'll be away up in the mountains before it gets hot to-day."

They dipped down into Placerville, and then up, up, they went, over hills that with horses had seemed endless, but which the machine conquered in short order. The road had been watered, and they were early enough to be ahead of most cars, so traveling was pleasant. They wound upward; then down, down, down—through wonderful pine-woods and across rushing streams that made you long to get out and try your skill at fishing.

"You'll have plenty of time for that, Jack," said his uncle, when the boy suggested it. "Just now the business on hand is to get there."

"Is n't it time for lunch, Mama?" cried Jan. "I'm so hungry!"

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"We 'll have lunch at Strawberry ; there 's fine water there," said his father. "Just an hour more, Jan. You can wait that long. How about some of your conundrums, Jack?"

Jack started in and had them all guessing in no time. The oldest school joke was fresh to the ranch children, and lunch was forgotten.

Even the grown-ups, however, were glad enough when they reached the lunch place. Half-way up a rocky hill, by the side of a roaring, tumbling mountain-brook, Mr. ver Planck stopped the car and they all jumped out.

"Can't the goats get out, too, Papa?" said Jane. "They look so tired."

"No," said her father, "it won't be long now before we get there. They are too hard to get in again. Give them some water, Jane, and a little grass." But the goats only hung their heads in disgust, and refused all the children's offerings.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Does n't it hurt their milk," asked Aunt Jennie, "to take them on such a trip?"

"Oh, for a few days they don't give as much as usual, but they always pick up again," said her sister, "and they will soon give twice as much as they did at home. It is their natural habitat, you know."

"They go up to the very highest peak," said Juliet in an injured voice, "and we have to go after them. Don't we, Jane?"

Half-past twelve o'clock found them at the summit. There they could look down into Tahoe Valley and see that beautiful, deep-blue lake in the distance, with the Nevada hills gleaming on the farther side.

Slowly they made the steep descent, and then sped through the valley and up again, with Tahoe behind them, past Fallen Leaf, that lovely lake so well-named, lying in the shadow of Mount Tallac, and then up the last, steep climb to the little Alpine hotel, perched high, with rocks towering on every side.

"There are the horses!" called Jane.





**LOOKING DOWN ON GILMORE LAKE FROM NEAR THE MOUNTAIN TOP**

The can p was just across the lake

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"I see Dixon!" yelled Jan. "Oh, I'm so glad we're here. Do hurry, Papa."

They were out at last, and all the children ran over as fast as they could to where Dixon was standing with a welcoming smile.

"Well, I see you got here," said he. "Pretty near on time, too." He dropped the reins over his horse's head and came over to where their ponies were standing tied to the trees.

"Now, Miss Jane," said he, helping her untie Jolly, "you'll have to be awful careful. Your father wanted I should put a curb bit on this mare, so you could stop her quick, but she ain't used to it, and if you jerk her, she'll sure rear up with you."

"All right, I'll be very careful, Dixon," promised Jane, as she jumped on. "My, is n't it fine to be on her again!"

"Wait a minute, children," called their father from the machine, where he was busy untying the load. "I want you all to walk for the first quarter of a mile. That part of the trail is very rocky and steep, and neither



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

you nor your horses are used to it. You and Jane will have to take the goats, Juliet; your mother will have Just, and I 'll be busy with the pack-animals."

"Why don't you put Just in a pack-saddle, Papa?" called Jan; "the way you did last year? That's the way we went into camp," he went on, turning to Jack. "Tommy was n't there, and Just went in one bag and I in the other, By the time he got there, he was fast asleep! My legs were nice and stiff, too."

"This trail is too narrow," returned her father, "and besides, we need all our packs, and more, too. We 'll take what we can to-night, and Dixon and I will come back for another load in the morning. You can manage the baby on Mopsa, can't you, Elizabeth?"

"Oh, yes," his wife answered, "we 'll get along nicely, provided we don't meet a tourist brandishing a fish-pole, as I did when I was leading the colts up. Give me a pillow

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

from that pile of blankets and I will make a good seat for him in front of me."

"Will you ride the black, Jennie? She's gentler than she looks," said Mr. ver Planck."

"I 'd a great deal rather walk," said Mrs. Dumont. "You know it's years since I've ridden. Why not let me lead the goats?"

"All right," said her brother-in-law, "if you're sure you'd rather. Just keep Mona Lisa ahead of you. Belle and the kids will follow her anywhere. Now you had better be off. There will be a lot to do in camp, and Dixon and I will come as soon as the horses are packed. But where *are* those goats?" He looked at the spot where the goats had been standing a minute before. Thankful to be free of the auto, they had turned down the road and were heading for home at a rapid pace. Dixon was too quick for them, however. He jumped on his horse, galloped around a little cut-off, neatly

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

tripped up their leader, Mona Lisa, with his ever ready lasso, and brought back that much astonished goat in triumph, the others meekly following. He handed her over to Mrs. Dumont with the caution, "You 'd better keep tight hold of that there old lady, ma'am, or there sure will be a mixup."

The procession started, Mama on Mopsa, carrying Just in front, in the lead, then Tommy's little white head, with Jan leading him, and after him the other children, each leading their own horse. Aunt Jennie brought up the rear with her family of goats.

"You can let them ride after you pass the gate, Elizabeth," called her husband. "If you get into any trouble, wait for us. We 'll be right along." And he and Dixon, seeing them well on their way, went back to their work of unloading the car.

It was a steep narrow trail, and the children, scrambling up the slippery rocks, were soon puffing and asking if they could n't ride.

"Go slowly, children," cautioned their

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

mother. "You know we are so high that the air is very different from that at home, and you will get out of breath much more easily. You can ride soon. See; the gate is just around that corner. Your father and Dixon put up a fence there last week to keep the colts from getting out."

Juliet went ahead to open the gate for her mother, and they all filed through, glad enough to climb on their horses.

Up and up they went, stopping now and then to let the horses puff. Aunt Jennie, in the rear, got farther and farther behind, and when they finally reached a level spot Mrs. ver Planck and the children stopped and waited for her to overtake them.

"Tired, Jennie?" she called. "Sit down and rest, and when I get up with Just, I'll send back one of the children with Mopsa."

"It's my knees," cried her sister, "and these awful goats! But I'll get there somehow. You go ahead."

They started up another steep pitch, a high bank on one side and a deep gully on

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

the other, when suddenly Belle, the mother of the two kids, who up to that time had been contentedly trailing behind Aunt Jennie, took it into her head to lead the procession. She pushed by Mona Lisa, held in check by Aunt Jennie, and went on, crowding her way past the children's horses. Merry and Gay snorted and let her by, but it was too much for Jolly. She tried to get out of the trail and climb the steep bank at the side. Jane, forgetting the new curb, jerked her back. Up on her back legs went Jolly, higher and higher! There was a scream from Jane and then they crashed down the bank together, rolling all the way to the bottom. Fortunately for her, Jane slipped back as Jolly went over and so followed her down the hill, instead of being caught under her as she fell. Mrs. ver Planck, who was ahead, heard the crash and the scream. Turning Mopsa, she came hurrying back, with a prayer in her heart for the safety of her little girl. Juliet and Jack both sprang off and dashed down to where

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Jane was lying in a little moaning heap. Jolly, just ahead, got up, shook herself, and scrambled back to the trail, where she stood trembling and shaking.

"Oh, my dear baby!" called Mrs. ver Planck. "Are you dreadfully hurt? Help her up, Juliet, and see if anything 's broken. I can't get off, with Just here."

"Oh, my bones! my bones!" sobbed Jane; "they 're all broken!" But she got up with the assistance of the older children, and they climbed back to the trail together. Her mother leaned down from her saddle and wiped away the tears. "There, there, dear," said she, "thank Heaven, you 're all right! But however did it happen?"

"Oh, Jolly got scared and I jerked her. Dixon told me I must n't, and I never will again. But, O Mama, I do ache so!"

"Where?" asked her mother.

"Everywhere," sobbed Jane. "All over!"

"Never mind, dear," cheered Mrs. ver Planck. "It 's a lucky thing you did n't get badly hurt. Mother will rub you to-night,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and you 'll be all well in the morning. Now climb up and we 'll hurry on. I see Papa and Dixon away below, and we want to beat them to camp. Jolly looks as if she were sorry, too. Hush, Just! Jane 's all right now," for the baby's frightened cries had added to the clamor.

So on they went, winding around the mountain, getting glimpses of lonely lakes and wonderful hills beyond, until they came out just under the peak of the highest mountain of all and rode along the little lake by which the camp was pitched.

"I see the tent!" cried Jane, who, since her fall, had ridden behind her mother. "Is that the place, Mama? Oh, there 's Cinders! This surely is our camp!"

"That 's it, children. And are n't we glad? I know two very tired little boys." She had been glancing back anxiously at little Jan, who showed every sign of going to sleep on his pony, and she was more than thankful that they had arrived safely.

"Tie your horses to that big log on the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

hill. See, there in that little corral Dixon has made. Then come and we will see if we can't have supper ready before the others get here. They will be tired, too."

That evening, after the blankets had been spread and the children tucked safely away, Juliet and Jane called a "good-night" from their clump of trees to where Jack was lying in his little clump.

"Good-night, girls," called back Jack, "and say, Jane, I hope the bones will all be well in the morning."

"Don't you worry about my bones," retorted Jane. "You get on Jolly and see what would happen to you."

"Oh, Merry suits me," said Jack. "He's a fine horse, and we'll have lots of fun together. Do you suppose we'll ride again soon?"

"Not to-morrow, anyway," said Juliet. "I heard Papa tell Dixon to turn our horses out. But there will be the boats, you know. I saw them on the other side of the lake."

"Keep still, children!" called Mama from



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

her place by the camp-fire. "You can chat all you want to-morrow. Now it's go-to-sleep time." The children obediently snuggled down in their warm blankets and, lulled by the wind in the tree-tops, were soon asleep.

### CHAPTER III

**T**HE sun shining in their eyes awakened the children early the next morning, but they did n't hurry to get up. There was still a little tired feeling left over from the day before, and they were stiff after their first night of the season on the hard ground. When they finally got their clothes on and came over to the kitchen corner near the lake, they found Mrs. ver Planck busily serving breakfast.

"Good-morning, lazy bones," she said. "This is to be your job after this, but come along now and get your breakfast. Then you can wash the dishes. There's so much to be done this morning."

"Are you going to let us cook breakfast, hot-cakes and all?" asked Juliet.

"Indeed I am. You and Jack and Jane

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

can cook each morning in turn. I'll show you how, and then you can go ahead by yourselves. There is an alarm-clock in my suitcase that the 'cook' can take to bed. Dixon will have the fire made at six, and we will expect breakfast ready at seven."

"But I never cooked anything, Aunt Elizabeth. Boys don't have to cook," objected Jack.

"Indeed they do, Jack," said his mother, who was sitting on a cracker-box nearby, enjoying her breakfast. "There will be lots of times when you will be glad that you have learned something about it. Besides, it's fun. Watch your aunt toss those pancakes! Don't you think you'd like to do that?"

"It won't be hard, Jack," said his aunt. "The mush will go into the 'fireless' the night before, and that will only have to be warmed. Then there is a coffee percolator in camp this year. I brought it especially for you children to use. There remains only the hot-cakes, or eggs, when we have them. You'll soon learn how. Whoever is cook will have

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

to be responsible for washing the morning dishes. That does n't mean that the others can't help."

"I'll cook for you, Jack, if you'll wash my dishes," suggested Juliet.

"Not much," was Jack's answer. "I guess I can stand it if the others can."

"You can settle that among yourselves," went on Mrs. ver Planck. "I would like the table set for dinner, and the dinner-dishes washed. You can take turns at that, too, I'll cook dinner, and maybe your Aunt Jennie will get supper. Most of that can go in the 'fireless' in the morning, Jennie. The rest will be just canned things."

"Oh, I'd love to do that, Elizabeth, and I'm sure I can help you with dinner, too."

"No; if you'll look after the supper, that will be all I need," answered her sister. "I have to be busy with the baby at that time. We will do the dishes together while the children are cleaning up for bed. Dirk and Dixon will look after the wood-supply and milk the goats, when they're not too busy

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

with the horses and their trail work. That will help a lot."

"Can't I help, too, Mama?" cried Jan.

"Of course you can," said his mother. "There 'll be wood to bring and potatoes to peel. You 'll like that. There is plenty for everyone to do. And here is a wonderful hot-cake for you to eat this very minute." She hurried back and forth from the stove to where they were sitting in a circle, keeping them well supplied.

Dixon had put the camp-stove on a pile of stones, high enough so that it was easy to reach the oven without bending too much, and just behind it was pitched the supply tent. Here all the boxes and sacks which Aunt Jennie had watched disappear into the wagon the week before were neatly piled. The cook could see at a glance just where everything was. Beyond, nearer the lake, was a rock fireplace, with a huge caldron, black from many camping seasons, resting on top. Here was the hot water supply for

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

all hands, and just beyond that was another pile of rocks to hold the wash-tub."

"We'll get the tables up this afternoon, after we bring up the rest of the supplies," said Mr. ver Planck. "But you'll have to stand up to them to-day. We won't have time to saw the logs for seats until to-morrow. Where would you like them, Elizabeth?"

"Put one near the stove, please, and the big one near those trees," pointing to a little group of pines nearby. "We'll get the morning sun there, and it won't be too far to carry the things."

"Everything is very nicely arranged, Dixon," she went on, turning to the cowboy.

"I'd have done more, ma'am," he answered, "but I had to put most of my time on the fence-work. But we'll soon have everything shipshape. I have the boughs cut for the beds. I kinder thought you'd like them as much as anything."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Good; then we can get right at them. You can start right in, children, when you get through helping your mother," said Mr. ver Planck. "We 'll be off now, Dixon, and bring up the rest of the supplies." And together they swung down the trail to the little meadow that had been fenced in for the saddle-stock.

The children worked with a vim. Breakfast was soon cleared away and they commenced to make the beds.

"Don't try to lay them too fast," cautioned their mother. "They must last six weeks, you know. If you break off the tops and lay them straight up and down, the way your father showed you last year, you 'll be much more comfortable."

"But, Mama, that takes so long," said Juliet. "Why, it's almost a whole day's job to make one bed."

"Well, make your Aunt Jennie's properly," said their mother, "and you can suit yourself about your own."



JULIET, JACK, JANE, AND JAN





## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"I 'll come and help you," said Aunt Jennie. "It won't take us long."

The morning sped by, and it did n't seem any time at all before Papa and Dixon were back again with the heavily loaded pack-animals. Mama called "Lunch-time!" and they suddenly remembered that no one had set the table.

"Well, there is n't any table yet to set," said Juliet. "But come on, Jane. It won't take us a minute to get out the dishes."

An appetizing lunch was laid out under the trees on a piece of fresh, white canvas. Their mother had tacked grocery-boxes to the trees, low enough to be easily reached, and here they found the dishes neatly put away.

"Hurry, children!" called Mrs. ver Planck. "You 'll find the soap in the box near the hot water, and towels are hanging on the same tree."

"My, that looks good!" said their father, when everything was finally ready, "and we

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

all have appetites to do it justice. Come on, Blue Jays! Did you get much done this morning?"

"We're half through with Aunt Jennie's bed," said Jane, "but we are n't going to do ours that way. I'm awfully glad that you and Mama have the air kind."

"May we swim to-day?" said Jack. He had been casting longing eyes at the lakes all the morning.

"Yes, indeed," said his aunt. "You may go in any day while we are in camp. But be sure and wait at least an hour after dinner, and tell either your mother or me when you go, so that one of us can be on hand. The lake is shallow near shore. If you don't go out too far, you won't have any trouble."

"Oh, I can swim," said Jack. "Nothing will happen to me."

"Yes, I know," said his aunt. "But this is fresh water, very different from the ocean. And it's cold, besides."

It *was* cold, as they found when they tried it that afternoon. Ten minutes of it proved

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

all they could stand. Mama had some hot chocolate ready as a surprise when they came out, and then sent them off for a walk to warm up.

"Climb to the top of that peak over there," said she, pointing to the cliffs rising from one side of the lake. "Then you won't be cold any more. That will be your boundary on that side; on the other you can go as far as the brook, the overflow of the lake. There ought to be good fishing there when you have time for it."

For a week or more they stayed near camp, so busy every minute that they almost forgot about riding. They helped their father and Dixon roll down logs which, set on end, made such good table-seats. They also finished the "cannery." This was a deep hole, dug near the kitchen, where all the cans and other things that would n't burn were thrown, to be buried out of sight before the family left, for they were old and tried campers, anxious to leave nature as they found it. In the afternoons the children

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

rowed, fished, and walked, coming back with their hands full of wild flowers—dainty, Mariposa tulips, found near the melting snow, and great bunches of columbine. The table never lacked a pretty centerpiece. Juliet, who was especially fond of flowers, spent hours looking them up in the botany book, naming the new varieties that she brought in.

Catching chipmunks proved an unexpected source of amusement. Dixon showed them how to make a trap out of a grocery-box, with a door hanging down which they could shut with a sharp jerk by means of an attached string. Inside they scattered barley, and then, sitting at a little distance, they would patiently wait for an unsuspecting chipmunk to enter. He would come; there would be a pull of the string, and then a joyful whoop: "I've got another! Help me to get him in the cage." The cage was a large grocery-box with pieces of wood nailed closely together along

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

the open side, but as the prisoners would succeed in gnawing their way to freedom almost every night, they never had many on hand at one time. Two or three times they were sent after snow, and in the evening were allowed to sit up around the camp-fire and enjoy the ice-cream that all hands had helped to make.

One morning when they came to cook breakfast, which they usually did together, they saw their horses tied to the hitching log. Dixon had risen early and had caught them up.

"We 're off to the Lake-of-the-Woods to-day, children," said their father. "We 're going down the new trail that Dixon and I have been making. Hurry up with the camp chores. Your mother and Aunt Jennie put up the lunch last night when you were in bed, so we can get an early start."

Cinders was to be left to guard the camp from the roaming colts. "He might just as well stay home," their father told the chil-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

dren. "His feet are still sore from the trip up. He *would* run with the horses, instead of riding in the wagon with Dixon."

They nearly all stayed at home, for just at the start little Jan came to grief. Dixon had blanketed their ponies, but had not tightened the surcingles. Jan got on without looking at his. Tommy, very frisky from his week's free run, started off down the hill at a rapid gallop, with Jan hanging on tight to the blanket. The blanket turned and, still holding on for dear life, with his head down between Tommy's front legs, Jan was carried over rocks and logs, just grazing them. A mighty war-whoop of "Whoa, there, Tommy!" from Papa and Dixon finally brought the pony to a stop, but not before Jan and all who saw him were thoroughly frightened. It took some persuasion to get Jan to mount again, but finally they were off, Tommy on a leading rein this time, held by Papa.

"I shall certainly get gray-haired on this trip," said Mama to Aunt Jennie, as they

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

brought up the rear. "That's too close a call! What next?"

They wound down one mountain, passed lonely falls, went through a rocky little valley, and so up again on the other side, but before they left the cliffs for the heavily wooded trail over the summit that would take them to their picnic grounds, they stopped a minute to look back.

"It's as lovely as anything I ever saw in Switzerland," said Aunt Jennie. "Look, Jack; how many lakes can you count?"

"Six," answered Jack.

"Oh, I can see one more!" said Jane. "'Way, 'way down, past the little hotel. It's ever so small from here."

"And see what different colors they are," said Juliet. "That one 'way off looks like a black diamond, and nearer they are deep blue."

"It's the shadows that make the difference," said their mother. "See that snow-bank stretching from that high peak right down into one of the lakes over there. This



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

whole valley was once the bed of a tremendous glacier, and it scraped out the beds for these lakes."

"I 'm still wondering where the colts you brought are finding their pasture," said Aunt Jennie. "So far I 've seen only rocks, trees, and water."

"Oh, there are little meadows here and there that you don't notice. They are getting enough," said her brother-in-law, "but they have to climb for it. That's one of the reasons we brought them up here. You see this life is as good for colts as it is for children. In the valley our pasture-land is soft, and their hoofs spread and get spongy if we keep them there all the time. But we must be getting on. Lead ahead, Dixon."

Lake-of-the-Woods proved a lovely spot. Great pines grew down to the edge of the water, and on the far side desolate cliffs rose steep and sheer.

"It would be a fine place for deer, if it was n't for the tourists," said Dixon, "but I

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

suppose they were frightened away long ago."

"We'll get plenty of deer in Alpine County next week," said Mr. ver Planck. "We'll be there when the season opens, and we'll bring you back a quarter, Dixon."

"Do you suppose I could kill a deer?" asked Jack.

Mr. ver Planck had been giving the children shooting lessons and Jack had proved himself a pretty good shot at hitting a large-size target.

"I'll take you out with me, anyway, Jack; maybe you'll see one."

"Can't we go, too?" asked Juliet and Jane.

"We'll see," said their father. "Now we had better have lunch, for we can't stay long. Camp is far away, and we must be back early."

They had a delicious lunch on the shore, and afterward, while the grown-ups were resting, the children wandered off along the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

lake-side to hunt for bright-colored stones and cunningly bent pieces of driftwood. It did n't seem any time to the little girls before their father was calling them back, shouting, "Time to go home, everybody!" Dixon brought up the horses and they mounted.

"Where 's Jack?" said Dixon. He was still holding Merry, waiting for Jack to come and claim him.

"Yes, where is Jack?" said his mother.

"Jack! Jack!" called the children. "Hurry up! Papa says it's time to go home."

But there was no answer; only the echo of their voices from the cliffs beyond and the rustle of the wind in the tall evergreens.

"Good gracious! He surely is n't lost!" said Aunt Jennie, turning a little pale. "Where did that foolish boy go?"

"I saw him go off among the trees right after lunch," said Jan. "He said he'd be back in just a minute."

"Perhaps he went back over the trail,"

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

said Papa. "Don't worry, Jennie. We'll surely find him. He can't have gone far. But I don't think you had better wait, Elizabeth. Go on with the children; we'll overtake you in no time."

"Oh, I hope Jack is n't lost!" said Jane. "Poor Jack! Just suppose he has to stay out all by himself!"

"And he might meet a bear!" piped Jan.

"Don't you think about bears," said Dixon. "Them stories was n't all true I was a-telling you the other night. There is n't anything fiercer than a ground-hog around these parts, and I guess if we can track a deer, we can find a boy with feet as big as Jack's."

"Won't you go, too, Jennie? We won't come back without him," said Mr. ver Planck.

"I'd a great deal rather stay here, Dirk; that is, if Elizabeth does n't need me," said Jack's mother.

"Well, suppose you wait on the cliffs where we stopped to look back when we

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

were coming in," answered her brother-in-law. "There will be no use in our riding 'way back here, if we find him nearer home. Now start along, children, and be careful. You 'd better get off and walk where it 's very steep. Are you sure you know the trail?"

"Of course we do," said his wife. "Besides, Mopsa would return the shortest way. She knows where the barley sacks are."

All the way back the children kept looking over their shoulders, hoping to catch a glimpse of their father.

"I do hope they 'll come soon," said Juliet.

"Jack will be frightened," said Jane. "I remember when I was lost last year."

"When you thought you were," corrected her mother. "I never heard such a racket. But now you see how easy it is, do remember to stay in sight. It spoils everybody's good time when a thing like this happens."

The children had had their supper and had gone to bed, much against their will, and Mrs. ver Planck had been sitting near the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

camp-fire an hour or so, getting more worried every minute, before she heard the clink of horses' shoes against the stones far below.

"Is Jack with you?" she called.

"All O. K.," came back her husband's voice out of the darkness, "and we hope you've got something hot for us."

"Oh, Aunt Elizabeth!" said Jack, slipping off Merry and coming close to his aunt. "I'm so sorry I've made you all so much trouble. I had a dreadful time, and you'd just better believe I'll stay close after this."

"Well, if you've learned that," said his uncle, stepping up to the fire, "you've learned a great deal. And here is another thing: if you find yourself in that kind of a fix again, don't begin to move, but stand still and think. Think of where the sun is, and of where it was before you started, and if you've just left a lake, look for the glimmer among the trees and go back to it."

"But that's just what I did, Uncle Dirk. You see, Aunt Elizabeth, I went back to

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

find a stone I had noticed on the trail when riding in to the lake. It looked all golden, and I thought perhaps I might discover gold, and then—all of a sudden—the trail was n't there, and I called and called, and no one answered. Then I began to run, because I knew you would all be waiting. And then I thought of the water, and I tried to find a tree I could climb to see if I could n't see it, and at last I did find one, and I could see water shining 'way 'way off, and I ran and ran and ran, and when I got there it was n't the same lake at all!"

"Yes," growled Dixon, "and you went over all those rocks. We had a grand time picking up the trail again."

"Well, we're all here at last," said his uncle. "Now get warm and drink that nice hot soup Aunt Elizabeth has waiting for you. We won't say anything more about it, but *don't* let it happen again!"

"I should hope not!" said his mother. "Talk about white hair, Elizabeth! I've a few new ones myself to-night!"

## CHAPTER IV

A FEW days later, while they were sitting around the camp-fire, Mr. ver Planck asked suddenly, "Who is cook to-morrow?"

"I am," said Juliet. "We're going to have bacon and milk-toast. Mama said I might try some."

"Well, set your alarm-clock an hour ahead," answered her father. "To-morrow we start on our horseback trip, and we must all be up bright and early."

"I should think so!" said Mrs. ver Planck. "There are the beds to make and camp-kit to pack, and all must be carried down the mountain again. I'm glad I left that box of groceries in the wagon. Shall I put up a lunch?"

"No," said her husband. "It won't be easy to get at things until we unpack for the



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

night. We ought to reach Myer's Station by noon; we'll join the Pater there. You will all enjoy a meal you have n't planned or cooked, I'm thinking. To-morrow morning, as soon as you have finished breakfast," he went on, turning to the children, "you can set out down the trail with Aunt Jennie. I shall use your horses to pack the blankets on."

"Are n't we going to ride at all?" asked Jack, looking glum.

"Yes, as soon as we get to the wagon," answered his uncle. "You may ride all the rest of the day; you'll be tired enough, I promise you."

"It'll be fun walking down," said Jane. "We can run almost all the way. We'll go 'way ahead and will have lots of time to play at the hotel. I saw some nice looking children there the other day when we rode down for the mail."

"Be sure you know where you're going," warned Aunt Jennie. "We don't want any more lost children. I think you had bet-





THE BABY'S MORNING BATH

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

ter stay near me until we get to the last turn; then you can go ahead as fast as you care to. Shall I take the baby, Elizabeth?"

"No," answered Mr. ver Planck for his wife. "Mama will ride, and Just will go with her. It's too long a walk for him, and we don't want a tired baby before we really start. Do you think after we reach the wagon that you can handle the team down those steep hills, Jennie? If you'd rather, I'll drive until we get to Myer's."

"Of course I can," said his sister-in-law. "There is a good brake, is n't there? I shall enjoy it."

"We'll ride nearby and open all the gates," promised her brother-in-law.

"Will you show us how to fix the blankets in the morning, Mama?" asked Juliet. "You did last year, but I've forgotten."

"All right," said her mother. "Run along to bed now. You must all be up betimes. Wake me when your alarm goes off, Juliet."

Camp was astir with the first, dim, morn-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

ing light. Juliet had breakfast ready before the sun was up, and the children ate theirs huddled around the fire, the air being cold and crisp.

"Now for those beds!" said their mother. "Bring the cord, children." She showed them how to spread the canvas and lay the blankets, tucking them in under the bottom quilt, just as they would under a mattress. Each bed had a fourteen-foot piece of canvas, two feet wider than an ordinary, single bed. There were eyelets about eight inches apart all the way down the sides, a foot from the edge, and also along the extreme edge for about six feet, or the length of the bed. These were first tied over the blankets, laying them across, and then the extra canvas was brought up from the bottom, the whole being laced together along each side.

"There!" said Mrs. ver Planck. "Now you have a bed that won't come to pieces, no matter how it is packed. It's an 'article of my own invention,' and has served your father and me on many a cattle trip."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"We can take Cinders, can't we?" asked little Jan, coming up to where his sisters and mother were working. "His feet are well now."

"Yes," said Mr. ver Planck. "We 'll ask Dixon to rope off the kitchen; then the colts can't do any damage when he is not in camp, unless they eat up your beds, but you know you 'd love to make more," and he laughed at the children's faces.

"If there 's enough rope, we 'll ask him to tie some around each bed," said Juliet. "But I thought Dixon was going to stay right here, Mama."

"He is," said her mother, "but he won't be in camp all the time. He must go out among the horses every day, and there is some fence work your father wants him to finish."

The children and Aunt Jennie were far ahead when the others were ready to leave camp. They could just hear their voices away down below.

"Give us a yodel, Elizabeth," called her

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

husband, as they came to an open stretch where valleys and mountains lay spread out before them. "This is just the place."

But a sleepy voice from the bundle in Mrs. ver Planck's arms exclaiming, "Please don't do that noise any more, Mama," soon put a stop to it, and they wound on down the trail with just the clatter of the horses' hoofs and an occasional whir of a humming-bird to break the morning silence. One of these dainty creatures buzzed on the tip of Mop-sa's ear, but an indignant snort and a toss of her dainty head soon sent him on his way.

It took some time to get the wagon packed and everything in place, but they were off at last, Aunt Jennie holding the team well in hand, with Little Just in a basket at her feet, where he could continue his interrupted nap, the others following on horseback. Two by two, came Jan and Jane, Juliet and Jack, with Mama and Papa bringing up the rear. The horses, full of spirit and glad to be off the rocky trail, went dancing along the road, the jingle of bits and the happy voices

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

of the children making gay music as they went.

It was a long ride, and despite the good time they made, it was well after twelve o'clock before they reached Myer's Station.

"Hello, Blue Jays! What a jolly looking bunch!" was their grandfather's greeting as the cavalcade pulled up in front of the long porch. "But how late you are! I've been waiting for hours. What kept you?"

"Nothing, sir," answered his son, swinging off his horse to the ground. "We've been coming ever since four this morning. Mount Tallac may look near, but it is n't. Here we are at last, however, and very glad to see you. And all of us are ready for lunch, I'm thinking."

The party welcomed a civilized meal with enthusiasm.

"What are your plans, Dirk?" asked Grandpapa while they were eating.

"We go as far as Dale's sheep-range this afternoon. That is at the upper end of Hope Valley," was the answer. "Just be-



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

yond there is a good place to camp, and we can put the horses in Dale's meadow, which will give them a chance to get something to eat. I'm only taking enough barley for the driving team. Did you remember to bring blankets?"

"Yes; my things are on the porch outside. I have everything I need. What next?"

"Then we'll go to Deer Valley for the next night, and we'll be at Highland Lakes the day after. Three days will be spent there for hunting and fishing, and then we'll come back by the same road."

"How is the road?" asked his father. "In good shape?"

"Very good, they say, as far as Blue Lakes," answered his son. "Luther's Pass is a part of the Woodbridge highway, and we may meet automobiles along there. After the lakes it's the same old neglected road. But we can go through all right. We did it before,—twenty years ago, you remember? I have an ax and saw in the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

wagon in case the road is blocked by fallen trees."

"Indeed I do remember," answered his father. "I was just a green young Dutchman in those days, and you and your brothers were about as old as Juliet here," and he told the children how they had traveled, the boys riding bareback behind the team, just as they were doing now. "I don't know how I ever got down that hill at Luther's Pass. It was a terrible road, all rocks. I'm glad to hear that conditions have improved."

"I don't see why they call this a station," said Jack after lunch while they were sitting on the long narrow porch in front of the hotel, waiting for the word to start. "There certainly is n't any sign of a railroad round here."

"It used to be a stage station," explained Juliet, "and still is, only now of course the stages are all automobiles."

Two o'clock saw them on their way again. About three miles beyond Myer's Station

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

they turned off the Tahoe road and headed toward Luther's Pass. Beyond, up the valley, lay a long stretch of level road.

"Here is a fine place for a race," said their father, who was riding in front of the children. "Come on, see who can win!" Off they went as fast as their horses could go.

"I don't want to go so fast," yelled Jan, who was doing his best to stop Tommy.

"All right," called his mother, "pull hard!" and she checked Mopsa to a steadier pace. But Juliet, who had been riding with her mother and Jan in the rear, was not to be beaten so easily.

"Hurry up there, Gay; you can beat them! Hurry!" she cried, and leaning forward on Gay's neck urged him to his fastest pace.

Gay, more than willing, stretched himself and sped along, gaining every minute. Around a turn they went, leaning to the curve. Gay overtook the others as Jolly and Merry, neck and neck, were pounding over a little bridge. It was too narrow for

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

three. Merry crowded over, Gay slipped, tried to recover, and then went over the edge with a crash and a splash! It was only a four foot drop, and the little river was deep enough to break the fall, but Juliet, not looking for such an ending to her race, was thrown headlong and went down flat into the water.

"Papa! Papa!" she called, coming up with her nose and eyes full of water. "I can't swim! I can't swim!" For her only thought was that she was going to drown.

"Stand up, child, stand up!" came her father's quiet voice from the road. At the first sound of trouble he had turned his horse, which was ahead of the others, and had come racing back to straighten out the tangle.

Juliet stood up, and finding that the water reached only above her waist, started to wade out. Gay was grazing unconcernedly on the bank.

"Are you hurt, Juliet?" asked her father.

"No," she answered, trying not to cry, "I

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

don't think I am. But I'm terribly wet. What *shall* I do? And oh, dear! In another minute, Papa, I would certainly have beaten those two!"

"A little water won't do you any harm," answered her father. "We'll wait for the wagon, and perhaps Mama can find something dry for you to put on. I'm glad it was n't any worse. Next time choose a better place to pass. What do you suppose would happen to me and my car if I crowded by the man ahead any old time. You must think. The trouble with you children," he went on, addressing the three, "is that you don't *think*. How about Gay? Is he scratched?"

"There's a cut on his front leg," said Juliet, examining her pony. "It's bleeding a little, but it does n't look very bad. Perhaps Mr. Dale will have something I can put on it."

"There is a can of gall-cure in the wagon," said her father. "Rub some of that in and

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

he will be all right. He does n't seem to be limping."

When Juliet and Gay were attended to they rode on at a trot until they reached the foot of the long hill which would take them through the pass.

"Here is where the road was so bad a few years ago," said their father. "You can see stretches of it here and there, left as it used to be where the grade has been changed, but now that it's a good automobile road we will probably meet some coming down. Be ready to turn out in a hurry. Many of the drivers are pretty careless about coming around the turns."

"It's the real woods, is n't it, Uncle Dirk?" said Jack, looking up at the tall trees around him. "Are there any wild animals here?"

"Oh, yes," said his uncle. "Perhaps there are lots of eyes that we can't see watching us now. There must be deer, and I saw tracks of a mountain-lion about here not so long ago."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Once past the summit, they stopped near Grass Lakes to allow their horses to graze a bit, while they waited for the wagon to overtake them. When it came up Mr. ver Planck said to his little son:

"You had better get in, Jan. We will have to trot right along from now on. Turn Tommy loose; he will follow just like a big dog. And take Cinders with you; he looks tired, too. We can stay here a little longer," he went on, turning to the others. "We 'll take a short-cut as soon as we are in Hope Valley; that will save at least a mile. The wagon will have to go around."

"Can't I ride Tommy?" asked Jack, who was getting very tired. He thought that perhaps a change in horses would make it easier.

"You can try," said his uncle, with a funny smile.

So after a good rest they started on again. Down a little trail they went, trotting single file after Mr. ver Planck, Jack mounted on Tommy and his aunt leading Merry behind.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

But Tommy had his own ideas about carrying such a heavy weight. Three times he proved to Jack that he did n't know all about riding yet. Jack was n't going to give up in front of his cousins, and he was ready to climb on again for the third time when his aunt, who was afraid that he might really be hurt against some rock, interfered.

"Do get back on Merry," she said, "and try Tommy some other time when you have n't ridden so long."

Jack, only too glad to change to his former mount, turned Tommy loose and mounted Merry.

"There 'll be a brook to jump, Jack," said his uncle presently. "Do you think you can manage it?"

"I 'll do my best, Uncle Dirk," answered Jack. "I can't get any wetter than Juliet did," and they all laughed together.

The brook safely crossed, it was n't very easy jumping for tired children—they soon came out again on the main road and headed up the valley.



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Are n't we almost there?" sighed Jane.  
"My goodness, I 'm so tired!"

"Would you like to get in the wagon?"  
asked her father.

"Oh, no," answered Jane, "but I *would*  
like to get there."

They trotted on and on through the sandy valley, and it was dark before they drew up in front of Mr. Dale's cabin.

"Well, look who 's here!" said some one, coming out of the doorway. "Just in time for dinner, too! Get off, folks, and come right in."

"Oh, no," said Mr. ver Planck, riding up and shaking hands, "There are too many of us. We 'll just go down the road a bit and camp nearby."

"Not much you won't!" answered Mr. Dale, for it was he who had greeted them. "You 'll stop right here. These rocks are as good as any," and he looked around at his little clearing. "The boys have been up to the lakes to-day and have come home with the limit. We have more fish now than we

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

can eat in a week, and there 's half a deer hanging outside. Come right in. We wish there were more of you."

His wife came to the door just then and added her welcome.

"It all sounds good to me," said Mr. ver Planck. "I think we 'll have to take you up. Get off, children, and we 'll spend the night right here."

The children had their supper first. It consisted of fresh trout which Mr. Dale had promised them. He cooked it himself and watched their efforts to eat, finally coming to their help.

"Does n't look as if you 'd had much trout over by Tallac, if that 's the best you can do," he said. "Look here, the bones come out just as easy," and he showed them how to open the fish down the center of its side as it lay flat on the plate. "Just lay back the flesh on both sides and then lift out the back-bone. See?" and he demonstrated his advice. "Like 'most everything else, it 's easy when you know how."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

The children went off to bed before the grown-ups sat down.

"It will not take them long to go to sleep," said Mrs. ver Planck, coming in from the little clump of trees where the beds had been spread. "They all are tired out. I don't think much of your twenty miles, Dirk."

"Well, I guess it has been nearer thirty to-day," said her husband with a grin. "I'd forgotten how long this valley was. They made it all right, and it won't hurt them to get really tired once in awhile."

Mr. Dale had helped unload the wagon and had noted the thin bundle of blankets that the children's grandfather had brought with him.

"I guess you forgot about mountain nights when you brought those," he remarked. "You'll sleep in the cabin to-night. There is an extra bed there, and you won't freeze here, anyway."

The mystery of the extra bed was explained in the morning when Mr. ver Planck



WASH DAY IN CAMP



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

caught their host climbing down from the loft over the log-barn nearby.

"It did n't hurt me none," he said, when taken to task. "I've slept in lots worse places, and your father sure would have been cold under those few covers. You'll find ice on the water-pails, if you look."

## CHAPTER V

**A**T breakfast that morning Mr. Dale suggested that they stay over a day and climb the high peak nearby.

"It's worth while," he said. "It's a clear day, and maybe we can look right down to the ocean. I've seen it from there more than once. It'll take only half a day, and the children can rest up all the afternoon. You'll make Highland's easy to-morrow, for it's not as far as you came yesterday."

"Take the three older children, Dirk," said Mrs. ver Planck. "Little Jan ought not to attempt it. We'll stay here and fish."

"All right," said Mr. ver Planck. "We'll see if we have any alpine climbers in the family. Come on, children; get your horses as soon as you've finished your hot-cakes, and we'll start."

As they rode up the Jackson grade Mr.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Dale pointed to a fallen monarch by the side of the road.

"That's the Kit Carson tree," he said. "See, there's the stump over there with his name written on it! But he did n't write it. The part he wrote was sawed out by a bunch of chumps and taken East to some fair. I wish some of us fellows had caught them at it; they'd have been a sick looking lot. This is called the Carson pass, and from the peak of Round Top, where we're going, you can look away over Carson Valley."

They tied their horses to the last clump of trees, beside a little lake, and then went on foot, slipping and sliding in the slippery shale.

"You'll have to do better than that, Jane," said her father, "if you want to get to the top. Lean out, not in toward the mountain; that will maintain your balance."

"But I'll fall," objected Jane.

"No, you won't; try it. I learned that trick in the Swiss Mountains when I was a boy."



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Gradually they made their way up, hanging on to the rough edges and digging their toes in the foot-holds that Mr. ver Planck showed them. Pulled from the front, pushed in the rear, higher and higher they climbed, till their horses below looked like tiny ponies. They stepped across deep fissures in the rocks that made Jane's heart beat fast with something akin to fear; and at one point they passed the ruins of two shacks, the weatherbeaten planks scattered here and there among the rocks.

"Who ever lived up here?" asked Jack.

"Those were government observation stations years ago," said Mr. Dale. "But wait till we get to the top. Then I'll show you where three thousand people once passed the winter, just on the other side of the mountain. Summit City, they called it, and they had a terrible time."

"What did they do that for?" asked Jack.

"Gold. They'd do 'most anything for gold in those days," answered Mr. Dale, "and will yet, I guess. I've seen places in



THROUGH FAITH VALLEY



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

these mountains where they could n't get through until they 'd taken their wagons to pieces and lowered them with ropes down the cliffs."

Near the highest peak of all they found an old ladder built against the cliff, but the poles were rotten and Mr. ver Planck would not permit the children to use it.

"I 'll climb up, and you can pass them up to me," he said to Mr. Dale.

"It 's like being on top of the world," said Juliet, when they finally reached their goal. "Just look at the mountains all around, and the lakes, and such heaps of snow!"

"There 's a snow-bank near where we came up that we can go down on," said her father. "You 'll have the slide of your life. What 's the matter, Jane?"

Jane was sitting in a little heap, holding on to a rock, her lips pale and pressed close together.

"It 's too high," she said. "I feel all trembly."

"You 'll be all right," said her father.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Sit still a minute. See, there's lots of room up here; you can't fall. You have a head like your mother's. We climbed this mountain two years ago, and she did n't like it at all; but you'll outgrow it if you climb every summer. Come around on the other side now, Juliet. We'll get out the glasses and see if we can glimpse the ocean."

Far, far, off, across the mountain-tops and a wide, wide valley, there was a deeper line of blue, but so nearly the color of the sky that even with the help of the field-glass the children could n't be sure it was water.

"How high are we, Mr. Dale?" asked Jack.

"Something over eleven thousand feet," was the answer. "I've forgotten just the number. We'll look it up on a government map when we go below."

The descent proved no end of fun. When they had passed the steepest part they took to the snow. It was "the slide of

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

their lives," as Mr. ver Planck had prophesied. Taking hands, the three children in the middle, they sped down.

"Don't let go!" yelled Mr. Dale, and the two men at either end dug in their heels to act as brakes.

With screams of joy and excitement from the children they landed with too much force for comfort in the loose shale, and they would have continued their slide if Mr. ver Planck had not stopped them.

"Look out for your knickerbockers!" he called. "Your mother won't think much of that!"

Jack got up and felt his trousers.

"My, I'm as wet as sops!" he said, "but come on, girls; we can run down here," and run they did, until they reached their horses again.

"We'll go home through the woods around the mountain," said their host. "There are two flocks of sheep below that I want to look over."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"I'm so glad we stayed, Uncle Dirk," said Jack, when they finally reached the cabin. "I like it all, but I think this has been the most fun yet."

## CHAPTER VI

**T**HEY made an early start the next morning. Mr. Dale came up with a sack just as they were leaving, and tossed it on the load.

"A mountain lamb," he said; "I killed it for you last night. There are some deer-steaks, too; have them for your lunch. And don't forget that you've promised to stay with us on your way back," he called, as Grandpapa started the team.

With shouts of thanks and good-bys they turned off into the lane that Mr. Dale had told them would bring them back into the main Hope Valley road.

It was a good deal rougher going than the day before, but Mr. ver Planck, senior, was on the watch for rocks and they made it without any trouble. Back into Hope Valley, then down through Faith and Charity,



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

the prettiest valley of all, they trotted, with here and there a sharp climb to test the strength of the wagon-team; then past blue lakes where the keepers of the dam came out to greet them and tell them that it was no use going farther, "a wagon just simply could n't get through."

"We'll take a chance," said Mr. ver Planck, and they went on down the steep descent into Deer Valley. Here they stopped for lunch and broiled the steaks that Mr. Dale had given them.

"My, that's the best meat I've ever eaten!" was Grandfather's comment as they sat around the fire near the stream that flows through the little valley. "What a life this is for your children, Elizabeth!"

"Yes," she answered, "there is nothing like camping to bring out the good or the bad in people; and, I'm thankful to say, it's been mostly good so far. Do you remember," she went on, smiling at her babies, "all the 'Oh, dears' we had the first summer we came out?"

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"My, yes!" said Juliet. "Papa said there were so many 'dears' in camp, he certainly would n't go out and hunt for more. But it's so much easier now; I suppose that's because we know how."

"Look at the sky," said Jack. "Say, if this were n't California and August, I should say we were going to have a rain-storm."

"We often have thunder-storms up here," said his uncle, coming up from the bunch of horses where he had been giving the driving-team their barley. "We've been lucky so far. It does look like a downpour, but we'll be in thick woods during the next four miles and you won't get very wet. The beds will be well covered; that's the main thing. You'd better hurry up with the dishes, children, and we'll get the wagon packed before it begins."

"Take them right down to the river, Juliet," said her mother. "There is n't any hot water to-day."

Half an hour afterward Jack decided that

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

California rains were as heavy as any he had seen in the East. They did not stop, but rode right along, sheltered by the tall timber.

"Don't get too far ahead, Dirk," the Pater had cautioned when they started. "This is the section those boys said I could n't get through." And his son promised to ride back if he saw anything that looked especially difficult.

They lost an hour or more sawing through a big tree that had fallen across the road, but except for that made good time and came out on the heights that overlook Hermit Valley to see a double rainbow in the eastern sky.

"No more rain!" shouted Jane, who was riding ahead. "Look! There is the promise."

"It's a good thing," said her father. "or we would n't have had a very pleasant night. I did n't bring a tent."

"Then we'd all sit under the wagon," said Juliet; "the way we did once before last





AT THE GOODFELLOWS' CABIN

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

year. That was n't so bad, but I'm glad we don't have to. Can we go ahead now and gallop when we get to the valley, Papa? It's a good road there, you know, and I'm sure of the way."

"All right," said her father, "but don't get too far ahead. Mama and I will wait for the wagon and see if Grandpapa needs help; there is a bad piece down this hill."

Aunt Jennie chose to walk with the baby when the wagon finally came up and she saw what lay ahead. She was glad, indeed, that she was out of it, watching the wagon lurch from side to side, bumping over the big rocks, looking every minute as if it would go over. But at last they made it, and came out below on the state road that leads to Markleville.

"Now you have only one more rough stretch, and that's not so very bad," encouraged Mr. ver Planck. "We can easily reach the Goodfellows' before dark, and camp in our old place."

Up the next grade, and then, turning once

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

more off the main road, down, down they went, passing along an open valley, the road winding beside a rushing trout-stream. They forded the little river, the tired wagon-team stopping for a grateful drink, and gathering strength for the next steep climb, they pulled up the heavily wooded mountain ahead. Rounding a curve near the top, the riders came in sight of a beautiful meadow. In the background towered high rocks, gleaming with snow, back of which the sun was slowly setting, tinting the opposite hills a lovely pink. A rushing mountain stream, with here and there a waterfall, came tumbling down from the snow-banks, and then wound quietly away through the meadow. In the middle, under a clump of huge fir-trees, stood a little cabin.

“Mr. Goodfellow! Mr. Goodfellow!” cried the children, riding up at a gallop. “We’ve come back again!” And the grown-ups, who were together in the rear, saw them jump from their horses and run to Mr. and Mrs. Goodfellow, the owners

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

of the cabin, who came out to greet them.

"Well, well, here are all the Blue Jays again!" said Mr. Goodfellow. "Seems to me you 're flying very late." As Mr. and Mrs. ver Planck rode up they all shook hands, and he went on: "I was wondering if you folks weren't coming back this summer. We've been looking for you every day."

"It's only for a few days, I'm sorry to say," answered Mr. ver Planck, dismounting. "We are showing my father and sister-in-law these mountains, and we could hardly skip the loveliest spot of all."

"Well, come right in," said Mr. Goodfellow. "You're welcome to stay as long as you can."

"May we go back to our hillside camp?" asked Mrs. ver Planck.

"Of course you can," was the answer. "I have n't let a camper go near that spot all summer. But first we'll all have dinner here. Now don't say anything more," as he saw Mrs. ver Planck hesitate; "dinner's



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

almost ready; we 've got plenty, and you know you 're always welcome."

"Is everybody like this in the mountains?" asked Jack of his aunt later in the evening. Mr. Goodfellow had insisted that Grandfather should take his guest-tent, and the others were warming up around the camp-fire on the hillside preparatory to going to bed.

"We 've been especially fortunate in our friends, perhaps," said his aunt, "but mountain hospitality is famous. I 've seen twenty or more people at dinner in the Goodfellows' little cabin, half of them strangers. He always leaves it open, with plenty of supplies on hand. Did you notice the sign on the door?"

"Clean up house and shut the door. This means *you!*" quoted Juliet, before Jack could answer.

"Well, that 's all he requires," went on his aunt, "and the only times I 've seen him angry were when people came by, helped themselves to a meal, and then left dirty





HIGHLAND LAKE

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

dishes behind. He says we are welcome to everything he has, and he really means it."

"Do they stay here all winter?" asked Jack.

"Oh, no," said his aunt. "This is government land, and all the mountain people have ranches below where they take their stock for the winter. They rent the pasture from the government, just as we have done for our colts this summer, and the rules are strict. The rangers tell them how much stock they can bring, when they can come in, and when they must go out in the autumn. If we should come late in October, we'd probably find a lot of Indians in possession of this cabin. They come up from Nevada, and go through these mountains every autumn to gather pinenuts. Mr. Goodfellow has told me that the hills are carefully divided among the different tribes or families, and that each family can only gather nuts from certain groups of trees. No trespassing is allowed. The government has n't anything to do with it; they have decided the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

matter among themselves. Most of their fights start when one tribe encroaches on the rights of another."

"Then no one is here in the winter time?" questioned Jack.

"Once in awhile a trapper lives here for a few months," answered his uncle. "There was one in the cabin two years ago, and when the Goodfellows came back in June, they could n't find their wash-tub anywhere. They looked all over the place, and it was n't until the middle of the season that they located it high among the branches of a fir-tree. The trapper must have used it on top of the snow, and it had lodged there when the snow melted. I've seen traps dangling down from the upper branches, when I've been hunting around here, that have been left hanging there the same way."

"It's high time you were all in bed," interrupted Mrs. ver Planck. "You've had a long ride. We'll have a late breakfast in the morning, so don't get up early."

They had a comfortable night, for the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

hemlock beds they had prepared the year before were still soft. Early in the morning, however, Mr. ver Planck was awakened by his little son, Jan.

"Papa, Papa," he said, leaning over the bed, "Cinders has his mouth full of pine-needles, and I can't see to get them out. They're sticking out all over his head, too, and he's crying about them."

"Pine-needles?" said his father, sitting up in astonishment, and he whistled for the dog.

Poor little Cinders came in slowly. He was a mournful sight.

"Oh, you crazy pup!" said Mr. ver Planck. "Don't you know enough to let a porcupine alone? We'll have a lovely time getting those out."

It was a good two hours' job, but Cinders stood it nobly, licking the hand that hurt him, for he knew that the pain could n't be helped. After he had finished Mr. ver Planck brought some of the quills over to the children and showed them the barbed ends.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Just like a fish-hook," remarked Jane.  
"They must have hurt him dreadfully."

"I guess they did," answered her father.  
"Cinders will have a sore head for some days to come. He's a sadder and a wiser dog."

"What are we going to do now?" asked Juliet, when they had finished the breakfast-dishes.

"We'll stay in camp most of the morning," said her mother, "and then walk up to the lakes for a picnic-lunch. Grandfather and Aunt Jennie must see them. Run down the hill, children, and ask Mr. and Mrs. Goodfellow if they can't join us up there."

A half a mile from camp two of the "Highland Lakes" lay close together, separated only by a narrow strip of land. At one time they must have been one large lake, and before that probably were the crater of an old volcano. Now they drained in opposite directions, and each was the source of a big river. Here was splendid fishing, and after the picnic lunch the older children,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

aided by Mr. Goodfellow, caught a goodly mess, enough for supper for both camps. The elders, with the two little boys, walked to the farther lake to see the wonderful view from that point, mountains and valleys stretching out for miles ahead.

"We are to have a good trail to the Yosemite through here next year," Mrs. Goodfellow told them. "Come up and we 'll take it together," she went on, turning to Mrs. ver Planck.

"I 'd love to," was the answer; "we 'll do it if we possibly can."

The next day Mr. ver Planck and Jack left camp before the sun was up on that long-looked-for deer-hunt.

"I 'll take you next year," their father had promised the little girls. "Perhaps Jack won't have another chance until he comes West again."

Jack, carrying his precious '22,' followed in his uncle's footsteps.

"Not so much noise, Jack," cautioned his uncle, after they had walked a goodly dis-



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

tance from camp. "A deer would hear you a mile away. You must be careful to put your feet down so that you don't break any twigs. We may see one feeding, and if we don't, we 'll hunt in the underbrush later and see if we can scare one up. They make their beds there and sleep all day."

All morning they tramped without any luck. Once, while it was still early, Jack's uncle pointed out a doe feeding on the hillside, perhaps three hundred yards away. Jack, regardless of the distance, was ready to shoot in a minute, but his uncle caught his arm.

"It's a doe," he whispered. "Keep quiet; maybe we 'll see a buck soon."

But at last they gave it up and turned towards camp.

"If I could only *see* a buck," Jack said to his uncle, "I'd be perfectly satisfied."

"I'd like to get one to take back with us," Mr. ver Planck answered. "We really need the meat in camp, but I'm afraid we won't get any to-day. I know one more likely

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

spot, though; it is near here. Keep very quiet and we may jump one yet. If you were older, we could separate and have a much better chance. When hunting in the brush, it takes one man to scare them up and the other to shoot; but I'm afraid you'd shoot in the wrong direction."

"Let me unload, Uncle Dirk," said Jack, "and I'll see if I can find one for you."

"All right," said his uncle. "You can try, at least."

They walked on. Soon Mr. ver Planck stopped and pointed to a cañon opening toward their left.

"Climb up near the top, and then go along the ridge on this side until you reach that clump of trees," he said. "Then cross over and come down the cañon and so back toward me, making as much noise as you please. Perhaps you will jump one. If you do, it will run towards me."

They separated, and Jack cautiously made his way up the steep hill. When he came down the other side he found the brush so

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

thick in places that he had to get down on his hands and knees to get through. He passed one spot that looked like a deer's bed. Suddenly there was a rustle behind him, and a deer he had n't seen sprang up and dashed out of the tunneled runway it had made for itself. Bang! Bang! came the sound of his uncle's gun, and then a shout, "I got him!" Jack crawled on as fast as he could and ran to where his uncle was standing, his eyes fixed on the brush ahead.

"Why don't you follow him, Uncle Dirk?" he called anxiously.

"Wait a bit," was the answer. "He went down, but he sprang up again, and if we follow him now, we may have to go a mile or more to get him. He went into that brush over there. If he once lies down, he won't get up again. That was a fine chance and we would n't have had it if we had stuck together, so he is as much your deer as he is mine."

An hour or more later, when they had followed the bloody trail and Jack saw the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

beautiful creature lying dead in the underbrush, he was heartily sorry that he had had anything to do with killing it. He helped his uncle drag it out and tie it to the branches of a tree with a rope Mr. ver Planck had been carrying over his shoulder all morning. Then he followed him back to camp very silently. He did n't say much when the other children questioned him about the hunt, and as soon as he had his mother to himself, he came close beside her and said:

"Mama, I never want to go hunting again. I thought it would be lots of fun, but I've felt queer ever since we shot that deer,—all sort of choked up inside."

"I'm glad you feel that way about it," answered his mother. "It is n't right to kill just for fun, but you see it makes a difference when people really need the meat; and then, if no deer were shot, they'd become an awful nuisance. You have to remember that side of it, too."

Mr. ver Planck had saddled a horse of Mr. Goodfellow's, his own being turned out

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

on the range, and had gone right back again to bring the deer home. The whole family was gathered around the cabin door when he came riding in.

"Oh, Jack," he called, "you missed it! I wish you'd come with me. What do you suppose I found trying to steal our deer-meat?"

"What?" chorused all the children.

But Jan had n't forgotten Dixon's stories and now called out: "Was it a bear, a *real* bear, Papa?"

"You've guessed it," was the answer, "and if we had n't tied it away out and down from the limb, we certainly would have lost it, and Mr. Bear would have enjoyed a good dinner. There he was," he went on, turning to Mr. Goodfellow, "sitting on the branch above, doing his best to get at it."

"Did you shoot him, Papa?" asked Juliet.

"Oh, no; bears don't do any harm," said their father. "I drove him higher, and then cut the deer down. Perhaps he's sitting there yet."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Can't we go right out and see him?" asked Jane.

"Too far, Jane," said her father, "but maybe you 'll meet one some day in the woods and see all you want of him."

## CHAPTER VII

**I**T was decided that they would spend another day at Highlands. The children longed for a chance to fish in the little river that had its source at the foot of the two lakes where they had made many a famous catch in other years; and they wanted to climb the cliffs behind the cabin and show Jack "Lost Valley," a little grassy glen set high in the rocks, always full of wild flowers at this time of year. The trail thither led over a steep snow-bank. Juliet and Jane knew it well, for the milk-goats in camp the year before had preferred that spot to any other, and almost every evening the little girls had had to take the climb to drive them down.

So the next morning, as soon as they were finished with camp chores, they gathered their fishing-tackle together and started down the hill, stopping at the cabin to say

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

good-morning to their grandfather. He had breakfasted with the Goodfellows and now was sitting on the salt-log near the cabin, enjoying the warm sunshine. Mr. Goodfellow was working nearby on a fish-pole for Jan.

"Wait a minute, Blue Jays," he said, "and I'll go with you. How is this, Jan? About your size?" and he held out a light rod which Jan took with great delight.

"Oh, surely I'll catch something with that! Thank you, Mr. Goodfellow. That's lots nicer than this old stick," and Jan threw away the crooked branch with which Juliet and Jack had provided him. "Now I can fish as well as anybody. Come on, all you people!"

"Don't go until the bread is in, Charlie," called Mrs. Goodfellow, appearing at the cabin door and waving her apron in a good-morning to the group. "It's all raised and in the ovens. Is n't that fire ready?"

"It will be soon," answered her husband. "I'll wait. Sit down, children. So you



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

like our mountains?" he went on, turning back to their grandfather.

"Health by the spoonful, I call it," answered Grandfather. "Just to think that I have lived in California all these years and have never known there was such a spot as this! I don't wonder that my son keeps coming back here every summer, instead of searching out new places."

"Yes, it's a great place," agreed Mr. Goodfellow. "It's always fine weather up here. Maybe we do have a thunder-shower once in awhile, but that's nothing; and we're so well protected here by the high cliffs on three sides that we don't get the heavy winds. Why, down in any of the valleys below us you'd be sure to be cold at night, and when you woke up in the morning your blankets would be wet. Now here it does n't get cold until snow-time, and the air is so dry that we never have any dew. I wish you folks could stay longer. Can't you?"

"You'll have to ask my son," answered

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Mr. ver Planck. "I'd like nothing better, but he is the boss on this trip. Here he comes now. How about it, Dirk?" he went on, as the children's father joined them, the baby riding on his shoulder. "Must we go right back?"

"To-morrow morning bright and early," said his son, swinging little Just to the ground. "Dixon has his orders to be at the beginning of the Tallac trail every day after Thursday until we come. But it takes him almost a day to get the extra pack-animals up and make the trip up and down, and I don't want him to lose his time that way. Then you know Jennie and Jack will have to leave us soon, for she has promised to be in New York early in September, and it's almost time for you and me to be getting back to the ranch. Perhaps you had forgotten that there is a ranch?"

"It's easy to forget up here," and his father smiled. "Still, I suppose our bread and butter has to be looked after once in awhile."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Well, if you must go, you must," said Mr. Goodfellow. "Pack everything you can to-night, and don't try to cook in the morning. You'll breakfast with us in the cabin. We'll round up the horses this afternoon, and then you can start right out. Not that I want to hurry you, you know, but I know what it's worth to get an early start."

"That's awfully good of you," said Mr. ver Planck. "We will be glad to do it, if it is n't too much trouble for you and Mrs. Goodfellow. What are you waiting for, children? Had n't we better be going?"

"It's baking day," answered Mr. Goodfellow for them. "I told them, I'd go with them, but first we must wait for the fire to burn down a bit so I can get the ovens in. It looks to be almost ready now."

"I'll stay and do that," volunteered Mr. ver Planck. "If you go, they won't need me, and you know I'm not much of a fisherman."



**THE DEER KILL**



**A CAMP BED IN THE OPEN**



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

They left him shoveling out the ashes under Mrs. Goodfellow's directions.

"Don't forget to take the bread out," called back Mr. Goodfellow. "If you let it burn, you'll be awfully sorry, for I heard my wife say she was making an extra loaf for you folks. And call back your dog; he is n't welcome on this trip."

Cinders turned back most unwillingly. He could n't understand their going off without him, but he soon forgot his troubles in making friends with the two collies of the camp. One of them stationed himself in front of the baby. The elders, absorbed in their occupation of properly covering the bread, were not paying much attention to the group. Presently a deep sigh from the little boy reminded his father of the child's presence. He turned to see him solemnly shaking the dog's paw over and over. Every time the baby let go, the dog would offer his paw again. Just gave his father an appealing glance. With a suggestion of

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

tears in his eyes, he said: "How much longer must Just shake hands with this dog? Just is *so* tired!" His father rescued him with a laugh and then went back to the baking.

The children fished all morning and had splendid luck. They got back too late for lunch, but that troubled them not at all. The three older ones filled their pockets with dried prunes and crackers. They each found a sack to use on the snow-slides, and Juliet, slinging the spy-glass case over her shoulder, called Cinders, and they started on their climb. Jan had had enough and decided to stay in camp for the rest of the day.

Halfway up the cliffs they came to the long snowdrift that never melts. Here they had some glorious slides, using their sacks as sleds. Then they climbed on up, and explored the little valley.

"I'll tell you what let's do," said Juliet, while they were sitting on the rocks at the lower end of the valley, eating their crackers

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and prunes. Juliet and Jack were near the edge, their feet hanging over, and Jane was a little behind. "Let's go up to the Three Trees, then cross back over the cliff and down to the lakes, and so come down by that trail."

"We'd better not," said Jane. "It's out of bounds."

"Oh, those last year bounds!" sniffed Juliet. "They don't count now. Besides, what could happen to us? We could n't get lost. You can see those three trees from almost anywhere 'round here, and I know the way. We'll get a fine view from the top, and we have the glasses. Come on; let's go!"

"Let's leave these old wet sacks here," said Jack. "We'll never need them again."

"All right," Juliet answered. "We'll spread them over the rocks to dry; then, if Mr. Goodfellow says he wants them, we'll come up in the morning and get them."

"Are you sure you know the way down?"



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

asked Jack. He still remembered his experience near the Lake-of-the-Woods and did n't want to repeat it.

"Of course," said Juliet. "The lakes are just on the other side, and Jane and I have been there hundreds of times. Come on!"

It was a hard climb to the Three Trees, the little clump of scraggly pines they had seen from below. They stood by themselves away above the tree-line, and when they reached them all were puffing and panting. But they felt well rewarded when they used the glasses and recognized some of the peaks they had seen from Round Top and during their ride over to Highlands.

"We're not as near the sky as we were on Round Top," said Jane, "but it's high enough for me. Look, Jack, that's Folger behind us, and 'way ahead is Silver Mountain. There used to be lots of mines over there in the old days."

"Mr. Goodfellow says there are shafts sunk around here," said Juliet. "Do you remember, Jane, the tunnel we found last



AT FALLEN LEAF

1

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

year when we were out with Mama? We were sure it was a real bear's den and were so disappointed when we found it was nothing but an old hole in the ground that Mr. Goodfellow knew all about."

"Did you go in?" asked Jack.

"No," said Juliet. "Mama would n't let us. It was all dark, and, of course, wild animals might have been inside. We were always going to return with some candles and explore it, but it was too far away from camp, so we never did. I think I can find it again, though, and some day I'm going to try."

"I wonder how deep those holes are," said Jack. "They must have been hard to dig up here in the rocks. I should n't like to fall down one."

"Well, come along, you two," said Jane. "You know it's pretty far around by the lakes. I wish we were going home the other way."

"Pooh!" retorted Juliet, loftily. "What are you afraid of? Cinders would n't let a

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

bear come near us, if we did see one, and Mr. Goodfellow says he has n't seen a mountain-cat around here for years."

"What's a mountain-cat?" asked Jack.

"It's a kind of lion," said Juliet, "lots bigger than a wild-cat. I would n't like much to meet one, either, but I know of two children who fought one off, and they were n't as big as we are."

"How did they do it, Juliet?" asked Jane, coming close to her sister and giving a scared look over her shoulder. "Tell us about it."

"Well, they were going out to get the cows or something, and the lion jumped on the little girl. Then the boy, instead of running away, hit at it with a stick he happened to have in his hand just as hard as ever he could; and it turned on him, and then she, even though she was all scratched up, helped him fight it and about gouged one of its eyes out. The horrid thing did n't like that at all, so it ran away. I think their father or somebody shot it all to pieces afterward."

"My!" exclaimed Jack. "Pretty plucky

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

kids, I call those two. I'd like to know them. But come on, girls; I don't know how much farther it is, and it's getting late. That's a dandy looking snowslide ahead between those high rocks. Let's take it. Now I wish we'd brought our sacks."

"A little wet won't matter now," said Jane. "We'll be going right back to camp."

So, with Jack in the lead, the three started down, going faster and faster, slipping and sliding, rolling over and over in their efforts to stop themselves. Cinders bounded down over the rocks at the side, keeping an eye on the three.

Suddenly there was a shriek from Jack, not of joy this time, but of terror. The snow gave way and he disappeared!

"Oh! oh! Juliet! Stop!" yelled Jane. "Jack has gone down! Oh, stop! Please stop!" and Jane dug in her heels and tried hard to sheer off to one side of the yawning gap in front. She shot by, and Juliet, just behind, managed to stop on the very edge.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Quickly she turned, and lying down full length on the snow, cautiously looked over the brink.

"Jack! Jack! Are you there? Are you hurt? Are you very deep down? Hang on to my legs, Jane!" she shouted over her shoulder to Jane who was climbing back as fast as she could, breaking the snow with her heels so as to get a foothold. "And don't shake the snow so much; maybe it will all go down. Jack! Jack! Why don't you answer? Where are you?"

Gradually her eyes grew accustomed to the dark interior of the hole. It narrowed down, and fifteen feet or more below she could distinguish a silent form, the snow piled high around it. It stirred, and Jack straightened up and shook himself.

"Where the dickens am I?" he grumbled, very much surprised. Then, in a sudden panic, remembering where he had been a minute before, he yelled: "Jane! Juliet! Juliet! Jane! Juliet!" louder and louder.

"We're up here, Jack," called Juliet.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Are you all right? Oh, dear, do be careful not to go any farther down."

"I guess I 'm most in China now," said Jack. "How do you think I 'm going to get out of here?"

"Let me see, too, Juliet," urged Jane anxiously, and she tugged at Juliet's feet in an effort to slide her back.

"Wait a minute, Jane!" and Juliet kicked back impatiently. "Jack 's awfully far down. We 've got to get him out somehow."

Jane stopped her tugging, but slid herself forward. Cinders joined them, and Jack, looking up from below, saw two little curly heads and the dog's pointed nose peering down at him.

"Get around on the other side," he called. "I can see rocks all the way up there. Then you won't fall in, too. I think I can climb a little way, but it 's awfully steep. I wish we had a rope."

"We 've got the strap from the glasses," suggested Juliet. "But of course that 's not long enough. Here, Jane, we 'll lengthen



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

it with our sweaters. Maybe that will reach."

The little girls worked with a vim, while Jack felt around below and tried his best to get a start up the steep sides. He climbed a few feet, only to slip and fall back again.

"This must be one of those shafts you were talking about," he called up. "It is n't a bit like a real hole. How high do you think I can jump, anyway?" he went on to Juliet, who was leaning over the edge and lowering a queer looking rope. "That thing does n't come within ten feet of me. You 'd better go home and ask Uncle Dirk to come and get me out."

"He won't be there," said Juliet. "Don't you remember? He and Mr. Goodfellow were going out after the horses. Besides, it would be dark before we 'd get back. You wait; we 'll fix the rope. Here, Jane!" and Jack heard a whispered consultation above, followed by a giggle from Jane.

Pretty soon down came the rope again,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

lengthened to the extent of two little blue "middies," the middle sleeves tied together and the lower one dangling over Jack's head, looking for all the world like a real arm stretched down to rescue him.

"Oh, if it were only a little longer!" said Jack. "Lean 'way over, Juliet. Maybe then I can reach it."

"That would n't do any good," answered Juliet. "We 've got to be able to pull."

"Here, haul it up again, Juliet!" called Jane. "I 've an idea. Take these," and Jane, unlacing her boots, drew off her stockings. "Now it ought to reach. Are you sure the knots are good and strong? Let 's try again."

"That 's fine," said Jack, when Juliet had lowered it again. "Now haul away. I can see lots of rocks to help, just a little farther up. Are you ready? Well, then, *pull!*"

The little girls hauled and tugged, and pulled and hauled. Slowly, very slowly, Jack made his way up.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Pull, girls, *pull!*" he shouted once, while he was passing a bad place. "Oh, pull *hard!*"

And they did pull, just as hard as ever they could. Once they let him slip back a few feet, when Jane lost her footing, and Jack would have gone all the way down again, if he had not caught at a jutting rock to steady himself. But gradually, with frequent stops to rest whenever he reached a place where he could hold himself, they brought him to the top. The triumph of seeing his head appear over the edge was worth all the work.

"You're out! You're out!" yelled Juliet, as she and Jane sank back in the snow with gasps of relief. "O Jack, I'm so glad you're up again!"

Their cheeks were flushed, and all three were trembling with the strain and the excitement. Jane was the first to recover.

"Here, give me my stockings. Let's get our clothes on, Juliet. There was n't much





**MIDSUMMER SNOW**

Where the Blue Jays had their snow-slides and where Jack fell into an old mine shaft



**THE GOODFELLOWS' CABIN**

The horses are enjoying the salt log

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

left to take off. Ugh! How red my legs are! Help untie the knots, Jack."

"Let's get off the snow before we do anything," said Jack. "I'm not going to fall down any more of your old mines; and we'll go back to camp by the way we came. I've had enough for one afternoon, and I want to get home."

"It will be hard to climb up again the way we slid down," said Juliet. "I really think the lake trail is the shortest now."

"No, it is n't, Juliet," Jane denied. "We'll go back just the way Jack wants to; he fell in the hole, and he ought to have the say."

"Well, I'd like to know who pulled him out, if we did n't!" retorted Juliet. "But come on; if you want to climb all that way back, I suppose we'll have to, only we'll try to find an easier way."

They went around three steep divides before Juliet saw a way up that suited her. Then they climbed in silence. The excite-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

ment of Jack's fall and the work of freeing him had told on them more than they realized, and all three were feeling tired and cross in consequence. They came to the top and looked down on the other side.

"That 's not Lost Valley!" exclaimed Jane. "Look, Juliet, it 's altogether different. Why, it 's much bigger than Lost Valley, and it has ever so much more grass in it."

"It must be," said Juliet, but her voice sounded doubtful. "There is n't any other valley like that around here. It 's just got to be."

"But it is n't, Juliet," went on Jane. "Where are the Three Trees? I don't see them anywhere."

"What 's the matter?" asked Jack. "Are n't we going right?"

"Something is wrong," admitted Juliet. "I 'm not quite sure which way to go. Please come back and go down by the lakes; we can't miss it that way."

"Well, I suppose we 'll have to,"

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

grumbled Jack, "if you don't know your way ahead. But we'd better hurry. The sun is down and it's getting dark. Uncle Dirk won't like our being out so late."

They turned, but not quite far enough, and they tramped on and on without coming in sight of any lakes.

"We ought to be going down more," said Juliet. "Oh, I wish it would n't grow dark so soon; everything looks so different. Hurry, Jack and Jane; we *must* get back. They will be so worried about us."

"It must be ever so much farther round this way," said Jack, presently when they had walked for more than an hour. "I wish we'd tried to find Lost Valley again. Camp was only a little way from there. Say, Juliet, do you think we'll ever get to the lakes?"

"We must come to them pretty soon, we just must," said Juliet. "Hurry, hurry, and don't talk so much." Juliet's voice was tremulous with suppressed tears. She was running ahead, jumping over the rocks.



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Jack and Jane came panting behind, Jane having all she could do to keep up.

"Do you think she knows the way?" asked Jack, as they ran on together. "It's getting awfully dark; we can't see much longer."

"I don't remember it as being so far as this," Jane answered. "But surely we must come to the lakes soon. Juliet, Juliet, wait a minute!" she called, "you're getting so far ahead that we can't see you."

Juliet stopped, and as they came up to her they saw that she was crying. Jane, worried as she was about their predicament, was even more distressed by her sister's tears.

"Don't cry, Juliet," she said. "Don't cry; we'll find the way somehow."

But Juliet was not to be comforted.

"I don't know where we are!" she wailed. "We ought to have reached the lakes long ago, and it's getting so dark we can't see to look for them any more. It's all my

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

fault. I knew we ought not to have come out of that valley and broken bounds. Cinders! Cinders!" she went on, hugging the little dog who, whining in sympathy, had stuck his head in her lap. "Why can't you show us which way to go?"

"He probably would," said Jack, "if we could only explain. Never you mind, Juliet," and he gave her a comforting slap on the back. "I know just how you feel, but it's nowhere near as bad as getting lost all by yourself."

"Do you think we're really lost?" asked Jane. There was an awed finality in her voice that would have made her mother's heart ache if she could have heard it. "Are we really lost, Juliet? Don't you suppose they will ever find us?"

"Of course they will," said Juliet, sitting up straight as she realized that her little sister needed cheering. "Of course they will, and maybe they'll find us to-night. Now if we only had a fire, we would n't mind

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

very much; and that would show them where to look for us. Let's see if we can make one."

"How?" questioned Jack. "I have n't any matches. I wish I had."

"Well," said Juliet, doubtfully, "the Indians do it by rubbing sticks together. We can try that."

The three little figures, so despondent a minute before, were suddenly full of action. They collected sticks and started rubbing them together with all their might. Jack was the first to stop.

"Bah! I might go on rubbing those things together for a week," he said, disgustedly. "I don't believe any Indians ever made fire that way. We'd better go on before it gets too dark to see anything."

"There is n't any use in going on," said Juliet. "I don't know which way to go. We must have been going in the wrong direction for ever so long, and it's too dark now to pick our way farther. We might fall down another dreadful hole. I can tell

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

which way to go in the morning. Don't you remember, Jane? The sun shines right in our eyes when we wake up, and then it goes down the hill toward the Goodfellow's, so we 'll have to go toward it to get back to camp. I ought to have looked when it went down to-night, but I never thought of it."

"If I had n't fallen down that mine, we 'd have been all right," said Jack. "Well, I 'm out of that, anyway. Now what shall we do until morning?"

"If we had kept right on after that and not turned back, we 'd have been all right, too," Juliet could not help answering.

Jane, seated on a low rock, was leaning forward, her hands still holding the sticks which she had been rubbing to so little purpose hanging down in front of her.

"I remember a picture in my history book," she said, not paying attention to the other two. "William Penn was buying some land, and right in front of him, leaning over a log, was an Indian whirling a stick between his hands. I believe that 's the way

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

to make fire. I'm going to try," and she jumped up and started to hunt up a log to meet the requirements.

"I remember," said Juliet. "But I suppose it was just a certain kind of a log. I've seen sparks when stones hit together. Could we get anything out of that, do you think?"

"Not just two stones, Juliet," corrected Jack. "It takes a horse's shoe, or some kind of iron, and we have n't anything like that with us. No, I guess we'll just have to be cold. Well, nights don't last forever. Let's get under some high rock and keep as warm as we can. There is n't anything to do but to wait."

"If we had the sun, we could unscrew the top of Papa's spy-glass and light the leaves. He showed me how to make a fire with that last summer. It's easy," said Juliet.

"If we had the sun, we would n't need a fire," Jack sagely remarked. "But that would help to-morrow. If we can't find

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

camp, we 'll make a big smoke high up somewhere, and then they 'll surely find us."

Jack spoke with so much certainty that Jane and Juliet felt greatly cheered. Together they hunted up a sheltered spot where they could spend the night.

They found just the place, beneath some scraggly spruces, and were busily engaged in clearing away the small stones, when suddenly all three started up. Jane seized Juliet's arm and they listened silently. Cinders, in front, gave a low growl. Across the mountains came a yap, yap, next long howls, and then a chorus, growing louder and louder every second.

"Coyotes!" said Juliet. "Oh, I wish we had a fire! Then they 'd never come near us."

"Well, we have Cinders," said Jane. "We 'd better pile heaps of stones together. Then, if they do come, we 'll have something to throw at them."

"Uncle Dirk says they 're cowards."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Jack tried to make his voice very brave and firm. "I don't believe they'd hurt us, but two of us had better stay awake at the same time, and the other one can sleep."

"All right; we'll take turns," Juliet agreed. "Jane, you must sleep first; you are the smallest."

They huddled close together. It was quite dark now. The night was cloudy, there were few stars to be seen, and a wind was coming up. But they had chosen their quarters well, and behind the high rocks hardly felt it. Their eager eyes looked out at the night. At first they started at every sound, imagining horrors behind every rock, but gradually the darkness and peace of the evening quieted their nerves. The coyotes stopped howling, and they relaxed a little.

"I've found some prunes," whispered Jack. "They were in my back pocket and I forgot all about them this afternoon. We'll divide them up. It's lucky I took so many. Let me feel and count them. There are seven," he announced. "That's

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

two each. We 'll all take a bite on the last."

"Give that one to Cinders," said Juliet.  
"Maybe he 's hungry, too."

They munched contentedly, and afterward felt a little better. Jane laid her head on Juliet's lap and closed her eyes. She had n't any idea of going to sleep, but she was a very tired little girl. It had been a hard day, and before she knew it, despite the haunting fear of wild-cat, bear, and coyote, she had dropped off.

Juliet felt her head grow heavier and heavier. "She 's asleep," she whispered to Jack. Jack did n't answer and there was silence for a long time.

Finally Jack felt his head nodding and straightened up with a jerk.

"We must stay awake," he said to himself. "Juliet!" he called softly. He put out his hand and felt for Juliet. She was curled around Jane, breathing gently and regularly. Jack sighed, "I 'll let her sleep," he thought. "I guess she 's tired, too."

All alone he kept the watch, but soon his



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

head began to nod again. He leaned toward the little girls, and slowly, so slowly that he did not fight against it, sleep laid her comforting hand upon him. Presently all three little babes in the wood were dreaming of home.

But Cinders, lying at their feet, kept guard over them. He seemed to realize their need of him. Staring out into the night, his eyes bright and his ears cocked, he was ready to spring at anything that might threaten his dear ones.

## CHAPTER VIII

**T**HERE was not much sleep in camp that night. Aunt Jennie had cooked the children's supper and had waited long for them to appear. She and Mrs. ver Planck had called and called, but no one had answered. Finally Aunt Jennie gave Just and Jan their supper, while Mrs. ver Planck climbed to Lost Valley to see if she could find any trace of the truants. She found only the sacks lying on the rocks, and coming down again, went directly to the cabin to ask Mrs. Goodfellow if she knew anything of their whereabouts.

"What! The children are not home yet?" said Mrs. Goodfellow. "Why, where can they be? They're not on the lake trail, for Charlie and your husband came in that way half an hour ago."

"I'm glad they are here," said Mrs. ver

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Planck. "I 'll run out and hunt them up. Perhaps, if they go out again on horseback, it would n't take them long to find the children."

"But they 're not here now," went on Mrs. Goodfellow. "They could n't find your horses on the north range, and they went right out again, over toward the south. Charlie said that maybe they 'd worked in around to the wagon-road and gone out. They 'll stay out until it 's too dark to hunt any longer."

"Our horses lost, too!" exclaimed Mrs. ver Planck. "Well, I 'm not worried over them. They 'll turn up, though probably we won't get off to-morrow. But I do wish those children would come in. Something must have happened to keep them out like this."

"It 's absurd, perfectly absurd, that they have n't come back before this. Most thoughtless of them, I call it. I hope you 'll explain to them when they do come in that this must never happen again." As he

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

spoke Grandfather laid down the dish-pan in which he had been peeling potatoes for the cabin supper and paced restlessly up and down the rough, board floor. "Did n't they know just how far they could go alone?" he went on.

"They knew last year's bounds," said his daughter-in-law; "but surely they are not staying away on purpose, and they are probably quite as anxious as we are. I'm going up to the lake to see if I can find them there. Perhaps, if I call, they will hear me. Are your dogs around?"

"No," said Mrs. Goodfellow, "they went out with the riders. I'll just put supper on, and then, if your father will watch the fire and tell the others when they come in, I'll go out toward the river. They may have gone down that way."

They set out in opposite directions. Mrs. ver Planck hoped every minute to see the three children running down the trail to meet her, or to hear their voices in answer to her calls, but by the time she had gone the

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

length of the lakes it was too dark to see easily, and reluctantly she turned back.

"I ought to have brought a lantern," she said to herself. "Perhaps they'd see the light. Poor little infants! How scared they must be! If only something dreadful has n't happened to any of them; but maybe they have come in another way, and I'll find them waiting for me in camp."

A figure on horseback loomed up ahead and she broke into a little run.

"Ohee! Ohee!" she called. "O Dirk! Are the children all right?"

"Is that you, Mrs. ver Planck?" answered the rider. "It's Charlie. Your husband took a lantern and the dogs, and went up Lost Valley as soon as we got in. He asked me to come out after you. You go on in now, and I'll ride farther up and see if I can't find them. We got the bunch of horses, anyway; that's something. Funny how they wandered off, when they stayed right near the lakes all last summer. Can

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

you find your way all right? Maybe you'd better take my flash-light."

"No, thank you," said Mrs. ver Planck. "You will need it, and I know the trail. What a lot of trouble we manage to make for you, Mr. Goodfellow. But please, *please*, find my babies!"

"Of course we'll find them," he comforted her. "The three are together somewhere, and they won't come to harm. Even if they do stay out all night, it is n't going to hurt them."

Mrs. ver Planck went back to the hillside camp, where she found Aunt Jennie crouching over a little fire near the two younger children. Jan was n't asleep yet, and as soon as his mother appeared he sat up and demanded news of the others.

"They have n't come in yet, dear," she answered, "but Papa and Mr. Goodfellow have gone out to find them. Now go to sleep and don't wake up Just. Send them some happy thoughts; I expect they need them."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

For a long time they sat over the little fire. Grandfather and Mrs. Goodfellow climbed the hill and joined them, and together they waited and waited. Manlike, Grandfather was filled with indignation at the trouble the children were causing, and the more he worried, the more he scolded, but he was just as anxious as the others. "I wish I were ten years younger; then I could be of some help, too," he remarked more than once.

The mothers did n't say much. There was nothing they could do except to wait, which, after all, is one of the hardest things to do.

It was after midnight when they heard Mr. Goodfellow's horse come down the trail, and Mrs. Goodfellow and Aunt Jennie hurried down the little hill to ask if he had any news.

"No, we did n't find any trace of them," he answered their questions, "I only came in to see if they had perhaps come back and I'm going out now the other side of Lost Valley.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

But it's next to impossible to see anything on a night like this. Just as soon as it gets light, one of us will surely find them. I met Dirk out on Folger; he was going around the mountain and may come on them any time. If I found the children at camp, I was to fire three shots; then he would come in. If he finds them, he'll light a big fire and bring them back as soon as there is light enough.

Out on the mountain Mr. ver Planck, determined not to come back without the lost children, was keeping steadily on his search. He was hoarse from shouting, and after parting from Mr. Goodfellow, trudged along silently, listening intently for the gunshots from camp that would tell him the children were safe at last. A long time passed and he did n't hear them, so he began calling again, "Juliet! Jack! Jane! Ohee! Ohee! Cinders! Cinders!" The collies followed at his heels, sniffing among the rocks. He could not explain to them what he wanted, and even if he had, they could not



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

have helped him. Collies have wonderful eyes, far better than a man's; and they depend on them almost entirely, for theirs is not the gift to follow a scent.

"I wish they had n't taken Cinders," Mr. ver Planck said to himself more than once. "He would follow them. If only they are n't buried under a snow-slide somewhere. I *must* find them soon. Ohee! Ohee!" he called again. "Cinders! Cinders!"

Farther ahead, in the sheltered corner under the spruces, the little white dog on guard over the three sleeping children suddenly lifted his head. He jumped up, listened again, and then, with a joyful bark and without a backward glance at his charges, disappeared into the night.

A few minutes later a small white object hurled itself upon a lonely figure slowly picking its way among the rocks.

"Cinders!" exclaimed Mr. ver Planck. "Thank Heaven! Now we'll find them!"

He tried to gather up the little dog, but





A BIT OF MOUNTAIN ROAD

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Cinders, beside himself with joy, wriggled out of his arms and barking madly, sprang ahead, leading the way. The other dogs took up the call, and the mountain rang with their clamor.

Back among the rocks Jane sat up with a little jump. At first she could not believe her senses, for the night before seemed a hazy nightmare. Then suddenly she realized where she was. The barking coyotes that had so scared her earlier in the evening were apparently very near. She clutched at her sister and gave a terrified scream.

"Juliet! Juliet! Wake up!" she called. "They're going to eat us up, and Cinders has gone!"

Jack and Juliet sat up, experiencing the same horror on awakening that Jane had felt. They huddled close together, listening, listening, and waiting for the worst to happen. Suddenly Juliet straightened up.

"It's not coyotes; it's dogs, real dogs. It's Cinders! Oh, let's call him to come back. Cinders! Cinders!" her cry rang

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

out in the night, and they all gathered courage at the sound of her fresh, young voice.

"Children, children!" came an answer. "Where are you?"

"It's Papa!" shrieked Jane. "O Papa! Papa! We're over here!" Running out together, stumbling over the rocks, they saw the gleam of their father's lantern coming toward them.

"Don't try to come," he called. "Wait for me!" And a minute afterward he had all three in his arms.

"It was my fault, Papa," sobbed Juliet a few minutes later. "I wanted to come home by the lakes, and Jane did n't want to a bit. So punish me; I won't mind—much."

"I think you have all been pretty well punished," said Papa. His voice was gentle, for he saw how nervously upset they were and what a strain they been under. "But it's been pretty hard on your mothers, children. You'll have to see what you can do to make it up to them when you get back. And it's a shame to have worried the Good-

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

fellows this way. Don't you remember what I told you about thinking? But come; we'll make a big fire. Mr. Goodfellow will see it, he is hunting somewhere near the Three Trees. He will tell them at camp that you are safe and sound, and as soon as it is light enough we will start back."

Four hours later three weary and wan looking children came into camp. Mama and Aunt Jennie gathered in the tired little spirits, and after a good dish of the nice, hot soup that Mrs. Goodfellow had ready for them, they rolled up in their blankets and went to sleep. It was so restful to be back, and they were so blissfully happy to be found again!

The return trip had been postponed until the next day to allow young and old to recover from the strenuous night just passed, and the children were still sleeping when the grown-ups met for lunch.

"I hope you'll take steps to make them realize how thoughtless they were," said Grandfather, who had not quite forgiven

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

the children the worry of the night before.

"They have been pretty well punished, as it is," said his son. "Of course Juliet should not have led the others where she was fairly sure we did not wish her to go, but they have all had an experience they will never forget. We must teach them more woodcraft, and I will give them a lesson in fire-making this very afternoon."

## CHAPTER IX

**E**ARLY next morning, after a good breakfast of Mr. Goodfellow's famous hot-cakes, the Blue Jays climbed on their horses again. Grandfather took up his reins, and they started on the return trip. The Goodfellows rode with them as far as the main road, and then waved a good-by.

Back over the same road they went, and it seemed much shorter to the children, now that they knew the way so well. They lunched in Deer Valley, spent the night near the Dale's cabin, and late the next afternoon were back at the beginning of the trail. Here Dixon, with extra pack-animals, was awaiting them. The riders stopped a minute, sleepy little Just was lifted to his mother's saddle, and then on they went, for it was late and there was much to be done in camp. Aunt Jennie offered to stay behind



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and walk with Grandfather, for he was determined to come up and see their camping grounds.

"Think I can't?" he exclaimed, when his son told him what a steep climb it was and suggested that he stay down in the little hotel, allowing them all to return in the morning. "Of course I can. Just watch this Dutchman! It's simply a matter of taking it slowly. You can come back and push, if I get stuck. I'm going up!"

More than four hours later he came slowly into the firelight. Mr. ver Planck had gone back down the trail with a lantern to help him, but he declined aid and made it all by himself. With a long sigh of satisfaction, he sank down on a rock.

"Well, I'm here," he announced, "but never again! Give me a cup of coffee, Elizabeth, and show me where I can lie down."

During the ride back the little girls had planned a farewell party to Jack.

"We'll have a tremendous bonfire," said

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

Juliet, "make some ice-cream, and maybe roast marshmallows, if Mama will get some."

"Let's invite the children down at the hotel," suggested Jane. "There will be a full moon next week and they can see their way down the trail or maybe they'd bring their blankets and stay all night. When shall we have it, Juliet?"

"The night before Jack goes away would be best," said Juliet. "Grandpapa will be with us then, too; you know he and Papa are going the same day. They will take Aunt Jennie and Jack somewhere, so that they can catch a train, and then will go on to the ranch."

So the morning after their return the children started work on the bonfire. Jack was much taken with the idea of a party, and they all worked hard to make it a success. Papa helped them choose a good place, an open clearing near the lake, with a huge, dead stump near the middle, where there would be no danger of a fire spreading.

"Use the stump as your base," he told

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

them, "and lay your logs up against it not too close together, so that the air can get through easily; then pile ever so many pinecones around the bottom, and it will all burn up together."

Mama promised the marshmallows, and suggested that they ask the children and their parents to supper, cooking it themselves somewhere near the bonfire.

"There is plenty of deer-meat," she said, "and you can have baked potatoes. That's easy, and I think they will enjoy it, and then you can make ice-cream for dessert."

The invitations were sent, and twelve children and some fathers and mothers promised to come. They would n't bring blankets, but a guide from the hotel would see them safely home.

"What shall we do about the ice-cream?" asked Juliet. "We'll never have enough for every one."

"Bring down plenty of snow," said her mother, "and we'll freeze it as we eat it."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

What shall it be? Junket and canned peaches?"

The children agreed that that was the best, and Aunt Jennie offered to make enough of her cookies to go with it.

The day came and great were the preparations. Papa and Dixon had become interested in the fire and had lent a hand, so that it had grown beyond the Blue Jays' wildest dreams.

"It's as big as a house," said Jan, looking up at it with great pride, "and I guess there are as many as thirty sacks of pine-cones stuck around in it. It certainly ought to burn."

They were all hard at work the morning of the party. Grandfather was superintending the laying on of still more logs, dragged over by the little girls. Papa was helping Jack build a rock fire-place for the meat and potatoes. Even the baby was bringing over pine-cones and sticking them in here and there.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"I'll tell you what, Jack," said Mr. ver Planck suddenly, "we'll make it a sacrificial fire! Where are those old clothes and boots you were going to throw away? My old ones are just about used up. I'll add them, and I'm sure there are lots of other things ready for the fire. Now if I could get up there and string a wire across the top," and he looked up. "I guess it's strong enough to hold."

Everybody was laughing when Papa finally finished his decorations. He had insisted on stuffing a pair of old trousers with grass, and they dangled from the top, with boots, shoes, and socks hung here and there. Every one had found something to add to the collection.

The party proved a great success. The visitors came early, anxious to see the camp and get in a boat-ride before supper. They all helped with the cooking of the dinner and enjoyed the deer-steaks that Dixon had prepared. Perhaps they were n't all cooked to a turn, but every one found them good,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

and that was the main thing. The potatoes came out hot and crisp from their rock-bed, and everything was well seasoned with fun and laughter.

The children were most anxious to light the fire, but Papa made them wait until dinner was over.

"You've no idea how quickly you will move back," he said, "once that begins to burn. Better get all through first, and then we'll go up on the hill for the illuminations."

When Mr. ver Planck applied the match it went up in a mighty burst of flame and the company moved farther and farther away.

"Red man make little fire, keep heap warm; white man make big fire, go far away. Roast one side, freeze the other," laughed one of the grown-up guests. "And by the same token I think that's the biggest bon-fire I ever saw! You people must have done some hard work."

"Look! there goes the last boot!" shouted Jack.

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"And there goes the straw-man!" yelled Jan. "Oh, I wish it would last forever!"

It was long before the last tall limb crashed down. The excitement of the children had subsided, and they were sitting near their elders, listening to the camping stories that were being told. One of the guests turned to Dixon, with a laugh.

"We heard that you had some deer-hunters up here. How about it?" he asked.

Dixon chuckled. "So they told on themselves after all! Well, it was really too good a story to keep. It happened while the folks were away. I was doctoring a sick colt one day in camp, and two fellows rigged up for hunting came through. They were all excited, and asked me if I'd seen any deer. 'Sure,' I said, 'deer are all over the place. You'll find them behind every tree.' 'Well, maybe you don't believe it,' they said, 'but there really are deer around. Why, we've tracked them right here to the camp! They must go through at night, when you are n't watching.' 'Sure thing,' I answered. 'My

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

dog and I, we sleep pretty sound; they might walk right over us and we'd hardly notice them at all.' They were kind of sore 'cause I would n't believe them, and they wanted me to come and see some of the tracks. There they were sure enough—heaps of them—and I had to admit that they certainly were tracks. 'Some horned animal,' I said, and I kind of edged them over to where the goats went out that morning. They picked up the trail,—the goats had it marked good and plain,—and I followed along to see the fun and save the nanny-goats. Pretty soon we came to where the two of them were feeding, quiet as you please. And I wish you'd seen their faces! They were good sports, though. They said the laugh was on them, and no hard feelings, but I did n't believe they'd tell it."

During the excitement of that evening the little girls and Jack almost forgot that they were to say good-by in the morning. But the happy party came to an end, and it seemed to them that they had hardly gone to



## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

sleep before it was daylight and time to get up for an early good-by. They found that their grandfather had started down the trail very early, so as not to retard the others, and they saw their horses hitched to the long log, waiting for blanket and bridle, for they were all going together to the end of the trail.

"Oh, I wish you could stay until we all go home," said Juliet, as they chatted together on the ride down. "But maybe you can come out next year and go to the Yosemite with us; that will be a fine trip. Let's begin to think about it now, and maybe if we think hard enough, it will happen. Things do come that way, you know!"

The Blue Jays stood in a little group around their mama, shouting and waving a good-by, when finally their guests were packed and ready and Papa had started the machine.

"Good-by, everybody!" called Jack.

"Good-by, Aunt Jennie! Good-by, Grandpapa! And come back soon, Papa!" called the children, and feeling blue, indeed,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

they turned their horses' heads up the trail towards camp.

"It won't be nearly as much fun without them, Mama," said Juliet, mournfully.

"Never mind, dear; think of all the good times we've had together. Changes have to come, you know. It will be time for us to go home pretty soon, so make the best of the next few weeks. We'll have to have a little school again; we have been having such a long vacation."

The days sped by. School in the morning made the afternoon's play doubly precious. In a week Papa was back again, and they had more lovely rides together, visiting all the lakes they had counted from the cliffs on that ride to Lake-of-the-Woods when Jack had distinguished himself. Papa could not stay long, for it was the beginning of the busy, bean season on the ranch, when the crop was cut and threshed.

"Let me know if it gets too cold to be pleasant," he said as he was leaving. "I'll come up for you any time."

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

The children had given up their daily swim, for the air was crisp and cold, and almost every morning there was ice on the little brook. There came a day or two when the wind blew fiercely, dishes were swept off the table, and they had their meals in the supply tent.

"A little more of this and the snow will be flying," was Dixon's comment, and he looked worried, for in case of a hard snow-storm it would not be easy to get the horses out.

He was a good prophet, for not many days later they woke to find their beds covered with snow and a white carpet spread over the ground.

The Blue Jays came to breakfast with long faces. "My hands are cold; my toes are cold," was the general complaint, and the baby was very decided. "I want to go home; I want to go home!" was his cry.

"I think it's time we were all flying home. Look who's coming over the hill, children!" said Mama.



DIXON AND A PACK HORSE

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25  
26  
27  
28  
29  
30  
31  
32  
33  
34  
35  
36  
37  
38  
39  
40  
41  
42  
43  
44  
45  
46  
47  
48  
49  
50  
51  
52  
53  
54  
55  
56  
57  
58  
59  
60  
61  
62  
63  
64  
65  
66  
67  
68  
69  
70  
71  
72  
73  
74  
75  
76  
77  
78  
79  
80  
81  
82  
83  
84  
85  
86  
87  
88  
89  
90  
91  
92  
93  
94  
95  
96  
97  
98  
99  
100  
101  
102  
103  
104  
105  
106  
107  
108  
109  
110  
111  
112  
113  
114  
115  
116  
117  
118  
119  
120  
121  
122  
123  
124  
125  
126  
127  
128  
129  
130  
131  
132  
133  
134  
135  
136  
137  
138  
139  
140  
141  
142  
143  
144  
145  
146  
147  
148  
149  
150  
151  
152  
153  
154  
155  
156  
157  
158  
159  
160  
161  
162  
163  
164  
165  
166  
167  
168  
169  
170  
171  
172  
173  
174  
175  
176  
177  
178  
179  
180  
181  
182  
183  
184  
185  
186  
187  
188  
189  
190  
191  
192  
193  
194  
195  
196  
197  
198  
199  
200  
201  
202  
203  
204  
205  
206  
207  
208  
209  
210  
211  
212  
213  
214  
215  
216  
217  
218  
219  
220  
221  
222  
223  
224  
225  
226  
227  
228  
229  
230  
231  
232  
233  
234  
235  
236  
237  
238  
239  
240  
241  
242  
243  
244  
245  
246  
247  
248  
249  
250  
251  
252  
253  
254  
255  
256  
257  
258  
259  
260  
261  
262  
263  
264  
265  
266  
267  
268  
269  
270  
271  
272  
273  
274  
275  
276  
277  
278  
279  
280  
281  
282  
283  
284  
285  
286  
287  
288  
289  
290  
291  
292  
293  
294  
295  
296  
297  
298  
299  
300  
301  
302  
303  
304  
305  
306  
307  
308  
309  
310  
311  
312  
313  
314  
315  
316  
317  
318  
319  
320  
321  
322  
323  
324  
325  
326  
327  
328  
329  
330  
331  
332  
333  
334  
335  
336  
337  
338  
339  
340  
341  
342  
343  
344  
345  
346  
347  
348  
349  
350  
351  
352  
353  
354  
355  
356  
357  
358  
359  
360  
361  
362  
363  
364  
365  
366  
367  
368  
369  
370  
371  
372  
373  
374  
375  
376  
377  
378  
379  
380  
381  
382  
383  
384  
385  
386  
387  
388  
389  
390  
391  
392  
393  
394  
395  
396  
397  
398  
399  
400  
401  
402  
403  
404  
405  
406  
407  
408  
409  
410  
411  
412  
413  
414  
415  
416  
417  
418  
419  
420  
421  
422  
423  
424  
425  
426  
427  
428  
429  
430  
431  
432  
433  
434  
435  
436  
437  
438  
439  
440  
441  
442  
443  
444  
445  
446  
447  
448  
449  
450  
451  
452  
453  
454  
455  
456  
457  
458  
459  
460  
461  
462  
463  
464  
465  
466  
467  
468  
469  
470  
471  
472  
473  
474  
475  
476  
477  
478  
479  
480  
481  
482  
483  
484  
485  
486  
487  
488  
489  
490  
491  
492  
493  
494  
495  
496  
497  
498  
499  
500  
501  
502  
503  
504  
505  
506  
507  
508  
509  
510  
511  
512  
513  
514  
515  
516  
517  
518  
519  
520  
521  
522  
523  
524  
525  
526  
527  
528  
529  
530  
531  
532  
533  
534  
535  
536  
537  
538  
539  
540  
541  
542  
543  
544  
545  
546  
547  
548  
549  
550  
551  
552  
553  
554  
555  
556  
557  
558  
559  
560  
561  
562  
563  
564  
565  
566  
567  
568  
569  
570  
571  
572  
573  
574  
575  
576  
577  
578  
579  
580  
581  
582  
583  
584  
585  
586  
587  
588  
589  
590  
591  
592  
593  
594  
595  
596  
597  
598  
599  
600  
601  
602  
603  
604  
605  
606  
607  
608  
609  
610  
611  
612  
613  
614  
615  
616  
617  
618  
619  
620  
621  
622  
623  
624  
625  
626  
627  
628  
629  
630  
631  
632  
633  
634  
635  
636  
637  
638  
639  
640  
641  
642  
643  
644  
645  
646  
647  
648  
649  
650  
651  
652  
653  
654  
655  
656  
657  
658  
659  
660  
661  
662  
663  
664  
665  
666  
667  
668  
669  
670  
671  
672  
673  
674  
675  
676  
677  
678  
679  
680  
681  
682  
683  
684  
685  
686  
687  
688  
689  
690  
691  
692  
693  
694  
695  
696  
697  
698  
699  
700  
701  
702  
703  
704  
705  
706  
707  
708  
709  
710  
711  
712  
713  
714  
715  
716  
717  
718  
719  
720  
721  
722  
723  
724  
725  
726  
727  
728  
729  
730  
731  
732  
733  
734  
735  
736  
737  
738  
739  
740  
741  
742  
743  
744  
745  
746  
747  
748  
749  
750  
751  
752  
753  
754  
755  
756  
757  
758  
759  
760  
761  
762  
763  
764  
765  
766  
767  
768  
769  
770  
771  
772  
773  
774  
775  
776  
777  
778  
779  
780  
781  
782  
783  
784  
785  
786  
787  
788  
789  
790  
791  
792  
793  
794  
795  
796  
797  
798  
799  
800  
801  
802  
803  
804  
805  
806  
807  
808  
809  
810  
811  
812  
813  
814  
815  
816  
817  
818  
819  
820  
821  
822  
823  
824  
825  
826  
827  
828  
829  
830  
831  
832  
833  
834  
835  
836  
837  
838  
839  
840  
841  
842  
843  
844  
845  
846  
847  
848  
849  
850  
851  
852  
853  
854  
855  
856  
857  
858  
859  
860  
861  
862  
863  
864  
865  
866  
867  
868  
869  
870  
871  
872  
873  
874  
875  
876  
877  
878  
879  
880  
881  
882  
883  
884  
885  
886  
887  
888  
889  
890  
891  
892  
893  
894  
895  
896  
897  
898  
899  
900  
901  
902  
903  
904  
905  
906  
907  
908  
909  
910  
911  
912  
913  
914  
915  
916  
917  
918  
919  
920  
921  
922  
923  
924  
925  
926  
927  
928  
929  
930  
931  
932  
933  
934  
935  
936  
937  
938  
939  
940  
941  
942  
943  
944  
945  
946  
947  
948  
949  
950  
951  
952  
953  
954  
955  
956  
957  
958  
959  
960  
961  
962  
963  
964  
965  
966  
967  
968  
969  
970  
971  
972  
973  
974  
975  
976  
977  
978  
979  
980  
981  
982  
983  
984  
985  
986  
987  
988  
989  
990  
991  
992  
993  
994  
995  
996  
997  
998  
999  
1000

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

"Papa! Papa!" was the joyful shout, and they dashed out to meet him, little Just toddling in the rear.

"However did you know we needed you so much?" said Jane.

"My, you 're not ready to go home, are you?" asked their father in a surprised voice. "I thought you liked the snow. Here you can have ice-cream for breakfast without having to go a step to get snow to make it with! How about it, Mama? Is it pack-up time?"

"We 're all packed and ready," said his wife. "But how did you get here so early?"

"I came through in the night," he answered. "They told me in the valley that the roads were blocked with snow, and I began to get worried. I brought two men to help Dixon out with the stock. They will be here soon, and the quicker we start, the quicker we get there."

Dixon hurried off for the pack-animals. Mama and Papa rolled the blankets, and the children started together down the trail,

## THE BLUE JAYS IN THE SIERRAS

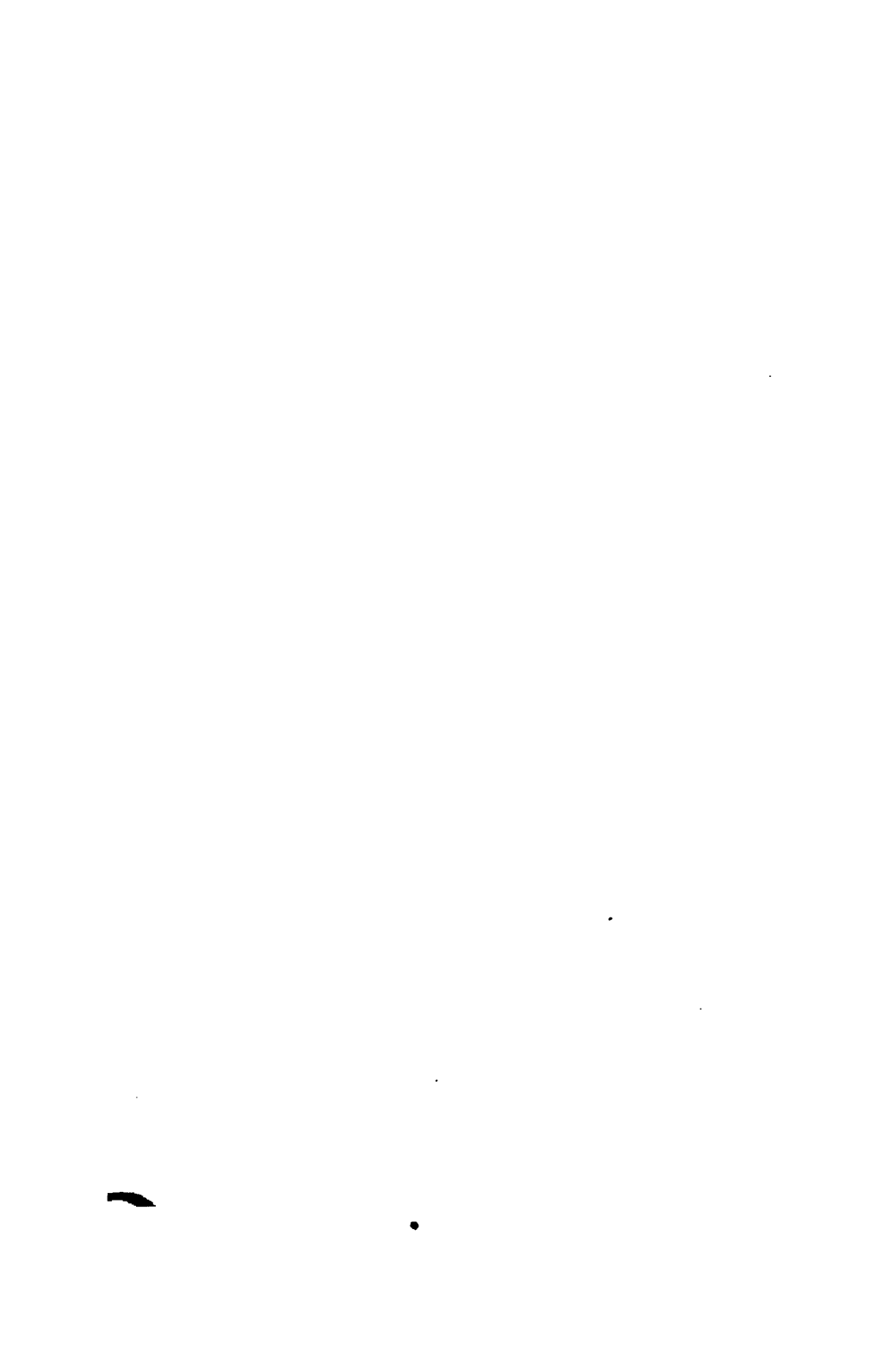
leading the goats. They knew the way well by this time. It was good-by to the little lake where they had had such happy times, and to the lovely hills all brilliant with the reds and yellows of autumn days.

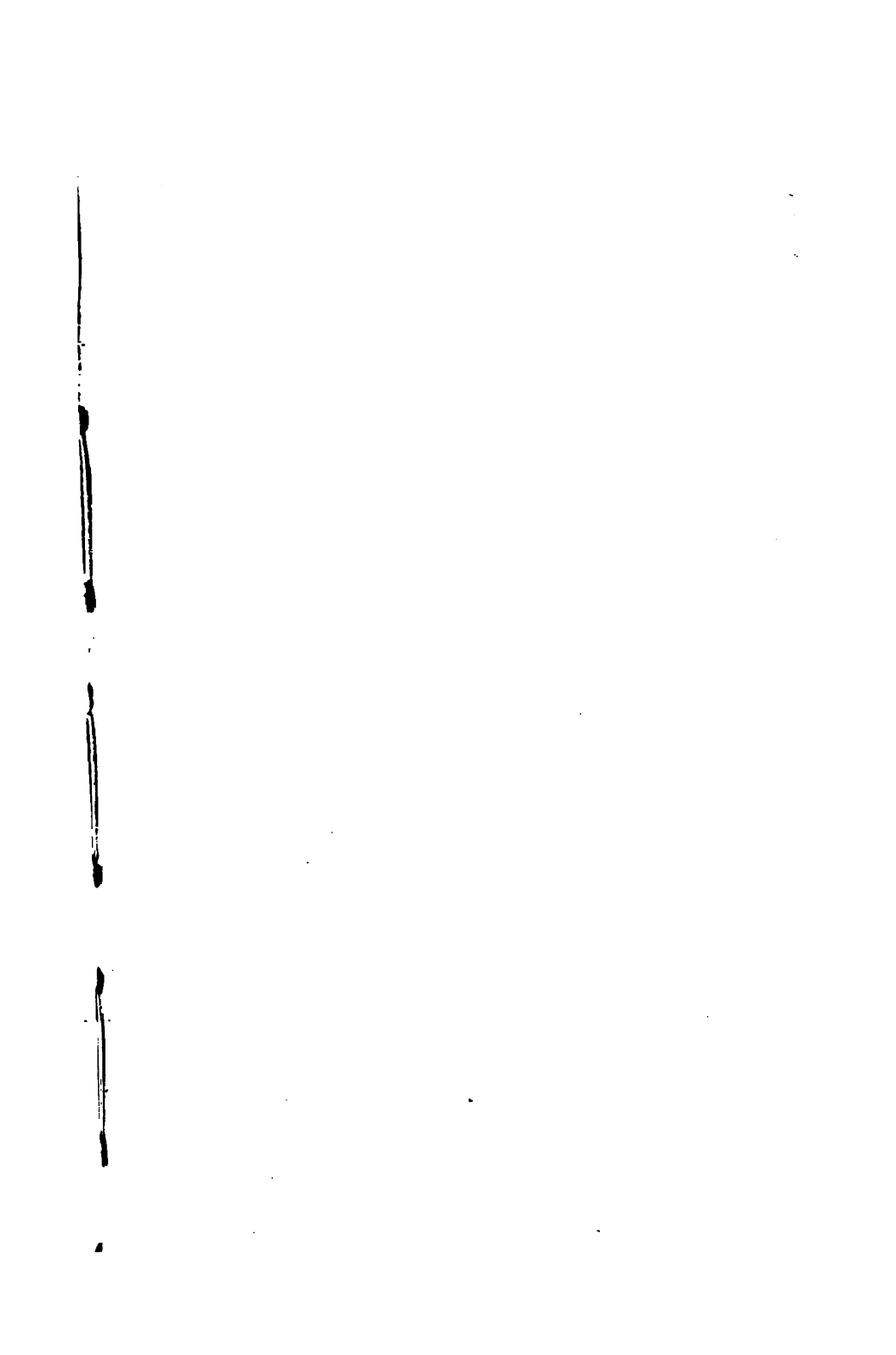
The car was loaded down with goats, saddles, and blankets. They climbed in, and soon were off. Home was ahead, and after all, "There 's no place like home!"

THE END











7  
35



FS  
3509  
L677  
B5

STANFORD UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES  
CECIL H. GREEN LIBRARY  
STANFORD, CALIFORNIA 94305-6004  
(415) 723-1493

All books may be recalled after 7 days

DATE DUE

F/S JUN 30 1995

JUN 30 1995



